DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 314 918 EC 222 078

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TITLE	National Study of High School Special Education Programs for Handicapped Youth in Transition. Vol. I: Qualitative Component.
INSTITUTION	Kansas Univ., Lawrence.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Jan 89
GRANT	G008530217
NOTE	189p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC08 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Case Studies; *Disabilities; *Educational Practices; *Education Work Relationship; High Schools; Naturalistic Observation; *Program Effectiveness; Program Improvement; Rural Education; *School Policy; Special Education; *Transitional Programs

ABSTRACT

The 3-year qualitative study evaluated high-school special education programs and their contributions to the transition of youth with disabilities. This report focuses on: the current status of programs for transition from school to adult life; program gaps as seen by administrators and practitioners; and reported priorities for program improvement. Part One of the report describes the study's naturalistic inquiry approach and analyzes findings from case studies of four schools' programs, discussing policies and practices that have a positive bearing on programs, and policies and practices that interfere with the design and delivery of effective programs. Part Two includes the four case studies, as follows: "A Case Study of Special Education for Students with Learning and Behavioral Handicaps in a Suburban Kansas City High School," "Special Education for High School Students with Educational Handicaps in a Rural Setting: A Vermont Case Study," "A Case Study of Special Education for High School Students with Mild and Moderate Disabilities in Philadelphia," and "Special Education for High School Students with Disabilities: A Case Study in a Rural, Small-Town Setting in West Texas." Part Three contains an auditor's report, which affirms the dependability and confirmability of the case studies. Approximately 35 references. (JDD)

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ED314918

National Study of High School Special Education Programs for Handicapped Youth in Transition
Vol. I: Qualitative Component

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January, 1989

Preparation of this document was supported by Grant No. G008530217, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, U.S. Department of Education. However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U. S. Office of Education; no official endorsement by the U. S. Office of Education should be inferred.

EC 222078

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Table of Contents

Part One: Approach and Findings

Abstract 1
Introduction 2
    Assumptions 3
Naturalistic Inquiry Methods and Procedures 8
    Site Selection 8
    Data Gathering and Interpretation 14
    Case Study Development 23
    The Audit Process 26
Case Study Findings 28
    Policies and Practices that Work 28
    Policies and Practices that Pose Barriers 36
A Concluding Remark 45
References 47

Appendices

    I. Number of Interviews/Respondents Per Role Type 48
    II. Time Frame 49
    III. Protocol Structure 50
    IV. Key to Audit Citations 52
    V. Charge to Auditor 53
    VI. Summary of Case Study Characteristics 54

Part Two: Case Studies

1. A Case Study of Special Education for Students with Learning and Behavioral Handicaps in a Suburban Kansas City High School

2. Special Education for High School Students with Educational Handicaps in a Rural Setting: A Vermont Case Study

3. A Case Study of Special Education for High School Students with Mild and Moderate Disabilities in Philadelphia

4. Special Education for High School Students with Disabilities: A Case Study in a Rural, Small-Town Setting in West Texas

Part Three: Audit Materials

1. Auditor's Attestation Report

2. Auditor's Background and Vita

Abstract

The results of a three-year qualitative study of high school special education programs and their contributions to the transition of youth with disabilities are reported and discussed. The National Study of High School Programs for Handicapped Youth in Transition employed methods of naturalistic inquiry to investigate the status of, gaps in, and priorities attendant to high school programs. Case studies of four high schools were developed and salient findings regarding these programs are presented herein. Policies and practices that facilitated the transition process as well as those that impeded it are described. Implications are drawn for further qualitative studies of special education policies and practices.

VOLUME I
QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

H. Earle Knowlton
Gary M. Clark

PART 1: APPROACH AND FINDINGS

Introduction to Qualitative Inquiry

As detailed in Volume II, the National Study of High School Programs for Handicapped Youth in Transition (NHSS) employed quantitative methods to survey random selections of a variety of educational personnel at a number of strata to determine the status of programs for youth with disabilities in public high schools. With respect to its scope and budget, NHSS devoted a relatively small fraction of attention and resources to the more qualitative nature of high school programs with an eye toward exemplary aspects of those programs.

As the study was planned, it was determined that three broad research questions lent themselves not only to survey techniques but also to a method of research termed by many as "qualitative" methodology. The following questions were addressed:

1. What is the current status of high school special education programs with respect to the transition from school to adult life as experienced by handicapped youth?

2. What gaps as seen by administrators and practitioners presently exist in high school programs? Why do they exist? What has been done and what is being done to correct these?

3. What do administrators, practitioners, and clients (handicapped youth and their parents) believe are the priorities regarding high school level program improvement?

A host of specific qualitative approaches to research have been described in the literature (e.g., Jacob, 1987). The appeal of a qualitative approach to these research questions stemmed largely from our desire to learn about the personal perspectives of those involved in high school programs and transition efforts. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) refer to the phenomenological nature of qualitative research which can portray policy implementation as it is experienced by the policy's implementors and clients. One member of the research team had participated in an earlier qualitative study of the role of educational cooperatives in the implementation of P.L. 94-142 in rural areas (Skrtic, Guba, & Knowlton, 1985). Because of the existence of this experiential base on the research team, it was decided to employ the methodology used in that particular study, naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Criticisms of qualitative research typically concern traditional scientific standards such as validity and reliability (e.g., LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Among its other attractive features, naturalistic inquiry (NI) offers the distinct advantage of what Guba (1981) called counterpart criteria in relation to traditional scientific standards, including validity and reliability. Although Lincoln and Guba (1985) criticize the use of NI in coexistence with an overall quantitative research approach, the appeal of these counterpart criteria in the interpretation of the above questions from a phenomenological perspective nonetheless persuaded the researchers to implement NI as a small part of the overall NHSS effort.

Assumptions

The NHSS made four assumptions relative to its implementation of NI. These assumptions concerned the counterpart criteria, the roles of objectivity and generalization, the human instrument, and the case study as the mode of report. The assumptions served to inform decision-making throughout the study as specific design issues emerged.

Assumption One: The Counterpart Criteria

NI methods are aimed at achieving the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the findings and interpretations of the inquiry. Lincoln and Guba (1985) have explicated these criteria and the specific methods for meeting them. Essentially, these standards serve as counterparts (not equivalents) to the traditional scientific standards of internal validity, reliability, objectivity, and external validity, respectively.

Methods related to the first counterpart criterion attempt to maximize the likelihood that the findings of the inquiry will be judged to be credible, not only by the researchers and their peers, but by the participants in the study as well. An inquiry is deemed credible not because it reflects an objective, consensus-driven reality; rather, it is credible if it clearly reflects a phenomenon as it is perceived by those who interact with it. An important goal of the research is to study an issue as the participants would if they had the time and resources. In the NHSS, teachers, students, families, school administrators, and rehabilitation personnel saw transition needs and the high school's role in meeting them in markedly different ways. The high school's role in transition may be defined more productively by those individuals who participate in it and who are affected by it. Our study attempted to capture rather than abridge, average, or unduly summarize diverse views and perceptions of the issues at hand.

The traditional standards of reliability and objectivity are represented in naturalistic terms by criteria related to dependability and confirmability. A dependable and confirmable inquiry is characterized by a clear, complete record of its evolution and conduct. Such a record should facilitate the tracing of any one assertion from the case study back through the compendium of data and field notes so that the assertion's source(s) and context(s) can be corroborated. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to this record as an "audit trail" (p. 210). Upon completion of the inquiry, the record is submitted to an independent evaluator (auditor) who examines the data, the means for obtaining them, and the interpretations of them. The purpose of the audit is to attest to the presence (or absence) of dependability and confirmability in the inquiry. Essentially, the auditor asks: can I depend on the means for gathering these data, and can I confirm their existence in the natural setting?

The final counterpart criterion, transferability, refers to the fit between the sending context (the site of the inquiry) and the receiving context (as represented by the reader of the inquiry). Rather than requiring the researcher to generalize the findings of the inquiry to other settings and contexts that are unknown to her or him, transferability places more of the responsibility on the reader to draw from the inquiry the findings and interpretations that fit the reader's own context. The researcher's responsibility is to provide sufficiently rich and thick descriptions of the phenomena being studied. In this way, data are provided with the depth and breadth necessary to facilitate such a fit by the reader should she or he desire it.

Several cautionary flags related to the collection and interpretation of qualitative data have been raised in the literature. Most address the credibility of data (cf. LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Miles, 1979). However, a significant problem that can affect not only credibility but also the other counterpart criteria is the sheer volume of the data. Essentially, one has to accumulate, store, retrieve, and display information relevant to the problem under study. This body of information, or data-dump as Lincoln and Guba (1985) call it, can be built from field notes (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984), index cards (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), or a variety of other manual means. Surprisingly, the potential benefits of computer-assisted data management for the most part have been ignored in the social sciences (Levine, 1985), and in qualitative research on exceptionality. Although advances are underway with regard to computer-assisted data management (Conrad & Reinharz, 1984), what does exist is modest in quantity, usefulness, and low-cost applicability.

Assumption Two: Objectivity and Generalization

The second assumption underlying the NHSS's use of NI relates specifically to the traditional scientific tenets of objectivity and generalizability. As indicated above, these bastions of science are not priorities in NI. In traditional scientific approaches, objectivity is a function of the researcher's systematic imposition of measured reality on to the phenomenon being studied. In NI, the researcher seeks to understand and communicate the perspectives reflected by participants' realities. By continually developing working hypotheses that emerge and evolve during the inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), she or he attempts to learn from and reflect multiple realities rather than impose through reductive techniques a single reality.

It is with respect to the function of generalization in research that quantitative approaches and NI are most disparate. In traditional approaches, generalizable findings are induced quantitatively through experimental design, inferential statistics, and sampling procedures

(Cook & Campbell, 1979). Within the qualitative research community, however, there is considerable debate about whether or not generalization is desirable or even acceptable (Greene & David, 1981; Kennedy, 1979; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Kennedy (1978, 1979) advocated the use of qualitative, case study research to evaluate the implementation of P.L. 94-142. It was believed that descriptions of factors related to implementation practices could be generalized systematically to implementors facing problems similar to those identified in a particular study. Indeed, some of this implementation research produced useful insights for policy-makers regarding the impact of P.L. 94-142. Yet, in an era when human service policies attempt to achieve equity by doing different things for different people aimed at different ends (Weintraub & Abeson, 1976), qualitative research, and particularly NI, which focuses on differences rather than similarities, could contribute significantly to our knowledge of the effects of social policies as perceived by the recipients of those policies.

Assumption Three: The Human Instrument

The preferred instrumentation for NI is human, not mechanical. Lincoln and Guba (1985) observed that human and mechanical instrumentation stand in a trade-off relationship with one another. The human, while not reliable in the scientific sense, can be infinitely adaptable to the unavoidable twists and turns that characterize the research process. The mechanical instrument is capable of reliability, but it rarely can adapt to any unknown nuances of the sample or the problem under study.

In this light, the conduct of interviews and the study of pertinent documents obviously require maximum adaptability in instrumentation, i.e., the researcher. Some of the NHSS interviews involved students with mental retardation. Securing meaningful data from interviews necessitated adaptability to the communication styles of these students. Readers are referred to Wyngaarden (1981) who has provided some helpful techniques in this regard.

The human instrument also can be exceedingly more "user-friendly" than can questionnaires, fixed-response observation forms, or other mechanical forms of instrumentation. Gaining participants' trust during the inquiry is an absolute requisite for credibility. This trust relationship between researchers and participants develops through social interaction over time. As (and if) such a relationship is built, the data become richer, more relevant, and more meaningful.

In this regard, one of the more interesting differences between quantitative and qualitative data relates to the means by which they are obtained. While mechanical instrumentation usually serves to separate the researcher from her or his data, human instrumentation can serve to fuse the researcher with her or his data. This relationship between researcher and data is not defensible from a traditional scientific standpoint because it violates the standards of reliability and objectivity. However, such a relationship is desirable from a qualitative perspective since it assists the researcher in understanding phenomena as they are viewed and experienced by participants.

Assumption Four: The Case Study as the Reporting Mode

The most useful way of reporting NI findings and interpretations is the case study. However, it is inaccurate to equate the case study with qualitative inquiry. While most qualitative approaches, including NI, require the case study as a reporting vehicle, not all case studies report qualitative inquiries (cf. Greene & David, 1981; Kennedy, 1979), and few report naturalistic studies. Naturalistic case studies allow for the telling of a story so that a problem may be understood better (Denny, 1978). They allow for detail sufficient for a reader to understand and apply in the context of his or her own particular situation. Best of all, they are rich rather than dry; and thus, they have the potential for interesting reading and for teaching (cf. Clecky, 1976).

Although many qualitative researchers would champion their value, case studies nonetheless present some vexing questions with regard to the practicality of dissemination. Currently, most major journals are space conscious. A 10- to 12-page limit in manuscript length constrains the case study writer in providing adequate coverage of what was studied. A 10-page case study usually is inadequate to report a qualitative inquiry appropriately. On the other hand, an 80-page study had better deliver a punch because those who see it in all likelihood will not read all of it.

Moreover, the format of a typical journal article can be stifling to a case study writer. In some instances, one has but two choices: organize the case according to the traditional scientific format, or publish the case elsewhere and risk a limited readership. Sadly, one member of the NHSS research team has experienced each of these length and format related extremes; all that can be offered at this point is the suggestion that a useful case study probably falls somewhere in the middle.

The methods to be discussed emerged from these four assumptions. The NHSS's qualitative component sought to gather information about the role of the high school in the transition process as seen by participants in that process.

Naturalistic Inquiry Methods and Procedures

This segment of the report describes the actual implementation of naturalistic inquiry. The assumptions discussed in the foregoing sections guided the day-to-day conduct of the inquiry and the emerging design. Our inquiry resulted in four case studies of high school special education programs and their contributions to the transition from school to adult life of students with mild and moderate disabilities.* Below we describe and discuss the specific procedures involved in the inquiry. They are site selection, data gathering and interpretation, case study development, and the audit.

Site Selection

Four sites were serially selected according to sampling procedures developed specifically for qualitative research by Patton (1980). Given the scope of the overall study, the breadth of the research questions, and the nature of NI, maximum variation across two dimensions was sought. The first, population density, was considered important primarily because of the attention paid in the literature to the special problems inherent in implementing special education in urban and rural areas (cf. Helge,1981; McGregor, Janssen, Larson, & Tillery, 1986; McLeskey, Huebner, & Cummings, 1984; Wilson, Mulligan, & Turner, 1985).

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* A fifth case study was produced at no cost to the project. Guy (1987) studied the transition process of a high school graduate with moderate to severe disabilities. The study's procedures and findings have been disseminated elsewhere (Guy & Knowlton, 1987).

The second dimension, resource proximity, was addressed in response to three factors: (1) the growing trend of high school special education programs to extend into the community for curricular and instructional resources (Falvey, 1986; Wilcox & Bellamy, 1982), (2) the role of the local community in high school affairs (Kirst,1984; Tye, 1985), and (3) the tendency of many students with mild and moderate disabilities to live subsequently in the community where they attended high school with neither jobs nor social networks (Edgar, 1987). It was assumed that, with reference to the poles on the resource proximity dimension, urban high schools were within close proximity to services and expertise, and that rural areas could be quite distant from available resources.

Given these two dimensions guiding site selection, we also attempted to select sites that were seen by their own participants as exemplary in regard to programs and services. A variety of criteria for exemplariness could have been applied; however, we were more interested in sites where participants believed exemplary programs were in place and exemplary services were being delivered. Interestingly, if public dissemination were to have been one criterion we considered (and it was not), each of the sites ultimately selected would have met that criterion. Two of the sites had programs and services that had been described in the special education literature; and all four had programs and services that had been presented at various professional conferences.

Each site was selected also on the basis of anticipated entree. We distinguish between access, which implies permission, and entree, which connotes freedom of entrance. Gaining access to sites involved varying amounts of formal requests, approvals, and paperwork transacted between school district administrators and the NHSS. Entree was a matter of the researchers' social skills interacting with political circumstances endemic to the site. Freedom of entrance depended on the climate and characteristics of the site coupled with the ability of the research team to identify and respond to them. The researchers' goal was to develop optimal trust in each site. Quite simply it is impossible to conduct NI at a site where there is not a trusting relationship between participants and researchers.

Thus, the objective of site selection was to gain access and entree in serial fashion to a suburban site, a rural-isolated site, an urban site, and a rural, small-town site with some degree of geographical spread across the country, although regional representativeness was not of primary intent. Studies of rural special education have reported extreme differences among various rural areas (Helge, 1981) and, therefore, the research team agreed that two of the four sites would be rural in nature. The isolated community versus small town distinction was arbitrary on our part. The order of selection was based to some degree on timeline logistics and also on the desire to apply what was learned in one site to the selection of, and conduct within, subsequent sites.

None of the four sites desired anonymity regarding locale. With the exception of the urban site, none requested anonymity for high schools. Therefore, we refer to sites' locales by name and, except for the urban site, to their high schools by actual name. The sites in their order of selection were Northwest High School (Shawnee Mission, KS, a suburb of Kansas City), Oxbow High School (Bradford, a small isolated community in rural Vermont), Manning High School (Philadelphia, PA), and Slaton High School (a small town in rural West Texas near Lubbock). At all times, the names of individual respondents were kept confidential.

With the exception of the rural small town, the site selection process was fairly quick and clear-cut. Because of the multiple steps involved in identifying the site in Slaton, Texas, its selection will be discussed first. We then follow with descriptions of the selection process for the remaining sites in chronological order.

Selection of Slaton

The decision to seek a small-town site in the state of Texas was somewhat arbitrary since it could be assumed that any state would have a community of this type with an exemplary program. However, Texas was sought on the basis of three factors: (1) it is on the cutting edge of educational reform with its recent legislation related to graduation requirements, minimum competency testing, and curriculum; (2) there were interested persons within the state who indicated a commitment of support to the project; and (3) it represented a different geographical region of the country than did our other sites.

As the first step in the selection process, NHSS's Principal Investigator (Clark) contacted Ms. Mary Cole, the person who had been designated by the state Director of Special Education as our contact person for the Texas Education Agency (TEA) relative to any request we had for information. This contact was made by telephone and then followed by written correspondence.

Cole recommended that nominations for a program come from the special education consultants associated with each of the 21 regional education service centers in the state. A meeting happened to be scheduled with this group within two weeks of our initial contact and it was agreed that she would poll the group and obtain nominations then. Clark was to provide her with the criteria we wanted to use for our selection. The criteria we developed for the small-town site were as follows:

1. The school district must be located in a town that is a county seat.

2. The town must be at least 50 miles away from any one of the metropolitan areas in Texas. (The exact distance became negotiable since the primary issue was whether or not the community depends upon a neighboring city for its resources.)

3. The community must have only one high school.

Clark suggested that Cole contact Mr. Jon Tate of the Texas Association of Community Schools, an organization of small school districts in Texas. He had agreed to assist in any way in our selection process and in gaining entree to any of the schools selected for consideration. Cole and Tate elicited 11 nominations from the service center consultants. Of these 11, three were highly recommended.

One of the three communities was seriously considered because it met all of the criteria related to size and geographical characteristics. Clark notified Cole and Tate of the decision to pursue this potential site and asked Tate to make an initial contact with the town's Superintendent of Schools. The Superintendent was then contacted by telephone to ascertain the extent of interest the school district would have in cooperating with us. He indicated a strong interest and agreed to study the materials we offered to send regarding the project and the type of participation we needed. These materials were sent and in a follow-up call it was agreed that Clark would make a personal visit to present the request formally to the key people in the district.

During this visit and in the several months to follow, however, we had serious reservations about the exemplariness of this district and its suitability for the study. Clark contacted a friend and former student, Mr. Frank Perdue, of the Texas Rehabilitation Commission (TRC) to see if there were justifiable reasons for our concerns. Perdue had been the Coordinator of School Programs for TRC for a number of years and currently held the position of Transition Coordinator. Both of these positions had placed him in a position to know about high school programs that were outstanding in the areas of cooperative work-study programming and transition. The project's definition of "exemplariness" had never been detailed, but there was an underlying assumption that a program could not be exemplary without a strong career/vocational focus and a coherent transition philosophy. Perdue did not know of anything special occurring in this district. He agreed to contact the vocational rehabilitation counselor who served the district to determine the reputation of its high school program. This inquiry confirmed Clark's concerns. The vocational rehabilitation counselor reported to Perdue that the program was "OK", but not the best with which he has worked.

With this information, Clark reported the dilemma to Cole and Tate. It was agreed that the district should not be used as a site and further that there was probably some question about all the programs that had been recommended initially. The issue of what the project meant by "exemplary" was discussed and it became clear that the 11 nominations by the service center consultants probably had been based on the overall reputations of the schools' special education programs (or their directors) and not the high school programs themselves.

Clark met with Cole, Perdue, and Tate in Austin, Texas to discuss a strategy for renewing the site selection process. It was agreed that TEA and TRC were both in positions to assist in eliciting a new list of possible sites. Cole agreed to discuss with Dr. Jill Gray of TEA the possibility of a request by the agency for nominations or self-nominations from local school superintendents in the state. Since Gray is a member of the NHSS's Advisory Committee, it was agreed that she should be a part of the planning process and that she should advise Cole of appropriate procedures. Perdue suggested that he initiate a similar call for nominations from vocational rehabilitation counselors who serve high school programs. He agreed to discuss this with his supervisor and be ready to proceed as soon as we provided a description of the criteria we would like to use in the selection process. Clark agreed to develop a set of criteria for the site selection and provide TEA and TRC with these criteria. Despite the efforts of TEA and TRC, there were only a few new nominations; and none bore fruit regarding the selection of a site.

During the latter part of 1986, Clark participated in a conference regarding transition in Austin, Texas and was introduced by Perdue to Ms. Vickie Hart, the Director of Special Education for the Southeast Lubbock County Organization (SELCO), an educational cooperative in Slaton, Texas. The introduction had come as a result of Perdue's knowledge of SELCO's work experience program and his awareness of our need to select a site. The initial contact with Ms. Hart was extremely encouraging as the SELCO Cooperative in Slaton appeared to meet all or most of the criteria for a site selection. Since this occurred prior to the formal strategy planning session discussed earlier (Perdue, Cole, Tate, and Clark meeting), no follow-up was initiated with Hart except to inform her of the statewide request for nominations through TEA and to encourage her to respond.

After the limited response to the request for nominations, Clark telephoned Hart to inquire about SELCO's intent. She reported that she had presented the SELCO Board with a rationale for asking to be considered as a research site for our study. The Board had responded enthusiastically and had initiated some planning steps to ensure some state support for additional programming prior to the research team's visitation. On the basis of this interest, a detailed prospectus was sent to Hart to share with the Board. The prospectus outlined the nature of the research, the requests the NHSS would make of the school, and what the Board could expect from the investigation. The Board notified the project in March,1987 of its approval.

Selection of Shawnee Mission, Bradford, and Philadelphia

Shawnee Mission is located 25 miles from the University of Kansas. It was felt to be an outstanding first site given its location, its suburban nature, its reputation for exemplariness, and the relationship between its staff and the NHSS's Principal Investigator. The PI contacted the district's Director of Special Education regarding the study and requested access to Northwest High School. The Director contacted the Principal and received informal approval. The research team then completed the appropriate research-related paperwork required by the district and received formal approval.

Bradford, Vermont was accessed with the help of Dr. Susan Brody Hasazi of the University of Vermont, a friend and colleague of Clark's. Hasazi's work has involved transition training of personnel throughout Vermont. She noted that Bradford would be an excellent site because of the promising results of some of her project's training efforts there. Hasazi made informal contacts with personnel in the Oxbow district, and put the PI in contact with the Director of Special Education. Again, formal approval was given.

One of Philadelphia's middle-level special education administrators earned her Ph.D. at the University of Kansas. She had just published the results of Philadelphia's Urban Model Project, an effort at establishing transition services for sudents with moderate and severe disabilities (McGregor et al., 1986). She was contacted by Clark regarding the possibility of the district's participation. She investigated the possibility with colleagues and superiors and advised the research team of the steps necessary in applying for access. The researchers completed these steps and formal access was granted. The school district selected the high school for study. Contrary to its experiences with the other sites, the research team had no input relative to the specific school selected.

Data Gathering and Interpretation

Data were gathered through two means. The first involved the collection from key respondents of relevant documents pertaining to the site. Over 220 documents were collected across the four sites. Documents were indexed per site; tables of contents of larger documents were included in the index for easy reference. Although all documents were examined, they were not content-analyzed in any formal way. Most documents contained descriptive information regarding the sites and the interagency relationships between sites and other agencies. In a few instances, memoranda and minutes of key meetings were obtained to assist in the development of insights into the evolution of district policies concerning high school special education. Other documents such as school newspapers, maps, curriculum guides, etc., were also collected.

Although documents were helpful in providing certain information for the case studies, the primary mode of data gathering was the interview. Interviews were conducted during site visits. Two to four researchers made three site visits to each of the four sites. Each visit comprised three consecutive days, with an average of four to six 60- to 90-minute interviews per day per researcher during the first and second visits. The first visits were divergent in regard to the posture of the research team. Efforts were concentrated on discovering what was necessary to know and questions typically were open-ended. The second visit was convergent in nature; the researchers planned interview protocols that were informed by the findings of the first visit. Thus, questions for the second visit were more focused though, for new interviewees, the researchers used a more open-ended approach. The third visits were devoted to the member-check process which, along with more precise descriptions of procedures used during the first two site visits, is discussed in later sections of this part of the report.

A total of 154 interviews were conducted: 27 in Shawnee Mission, 33 in Bradford, 30 in Philadelphia, and 64 in Slaton. Interviews were conducted with a total of 177 respondents who represented a variety of personnel roles at the high school and district levels. Respondents included special education teachers and administrators as well as personnel from vocational schools, personnel representing state educational and rehabilitation agencies, parents, students, and employers. Some of the interviews were conducted with more than one respondent at a time, and several respondents were interviewed more than once. Appendix I shows the number of respondents per role for each site. The remainder of this section will address the conduct of interviews and the organization and interpretation of data gathered from them.

Entree and the Arrangements of Site Visits and Interviews

Upon formal access to a site, the research team began the development of entree. The time frame per site from initial access through the completion of the case study audit is shown in Appendix II. Entree was accomplished to varying degrees across the sites. The research team delegated a lead researcher for each site. They were Knowlton (Shawnee Mission, Slaton, and toward the later stages of the study, Philadelphia), and Clark (Bradford). Dorsey, also NHSS's Project Coordinator, originally served as the lead researcher for the Philadelphia site. For each site there was a key contact person with whom the lead researcher interacted by phone and letter concerning the overall goals of the study and site visit arrangements. Once a contact person at the site had been established, the lead researcher worked with that person to schedule interviews and handle any other necessary arrangements. The lead researcher submitted a list of desired interview role types and the contact person arranged the interview schedule with personnel representing the role types listed above and shown in tabular form in Appendix I.

As we have noted, trust is one primary predictor of the success of a naturalistic study. Entree is the first major step toward trust. In each site, the quality of entree as well as the degree of it differed. A major reason for this difference quite simply was the "clout" the contact person wielded within the school district. In Shawnee Mission, access matters were handled between the PI and the Director of Special Education. Entree, however, was initiated by the research team with the two lead teachers at Northwest's Learning Center, a special education resource room. As the study progressed, these teachers evolved into "elite" respondents (Dexter, 1970) as well as useful liaisons regarding scheduling. Conversely, fewer contacts with the Director and his administrative staff occurred.

With respect to Bradford, Hasazi put Clark in contact with the Director of Special Education. Clark and the Director developed a rapport sufficient for entree. Unfortunately, the Director left that position at the end of the school year, a point chronologically between the first and second site visits to Bradford. Nevertheless, the vocational special needs teacher at Oxbow had emerged as an elite respondent during the first visit, and became Clark's liaison for entree and scheduling for the remainder of the study.

Philadelphia presented the most difficult problems relative to entree. Once formal access was granted, Dorsey handled interview arrangements with the original contact person who, prior to the second site visit, supervised programs for severely handicapped students. During the interim between the first and second site visits, she was promoted to Director of the Office of Program Development, a middle level slot in the district's special education administrative hierarchy. Upon access and at the stage where initial entree was being attempted, she had no control over the selection of the high school under study; nor, *ipso facto*, did the research team.

Given the district's size and administrative structure, such input from this point of contact would have been of little use even if it were to have been available to the research team. Philadelphia high schools, including their special education programs, are supervised under the Superintendent's line rather than the Special Education Director's line. Although this element of school administration is common to most districts, Philadelphia's sheer bureaucratic size obviated the crossing of organizational boundaries that typified the team's efforts in other sites with regard to entree.

Moreover, the point of contact predicated the nature of entree in Philadelphia. If the team's point of contact had been the high school, there would have been a better quality of high school entree than there actually was. The team's entree relative to the district's middle level special education administration was useful and enlightening; however, entree in the high school selected for study never was established satisfactorily. The entree in special education was particularly useful in establishing a relationship with the city's regional vocational school. Yet faced with the task of establishing entree into a barred door, Dorsey, as the lead researcher for the site, followed the path of least resistance and continued to develop a relationship with the vocational school. As shall be discussed later, the research team ultimately found that it had a case study draft that addressed vocational education for youth with disabilities and not high school special education.

Once formal access was established, the Slaton site turned out to be a model for the development of entree and trust in NI studies. As described earlier, selecting a specific district was the most difficult task relative to this site. Once the site was selected and the lead researcher (Knowlton) initiated contact with the Director of Special Education, arrangements ran smoothly. As the study progressed, there emerged the highest degree of trust evidenced in any of the four sites.

Protocol Development

Unlike entree, which was attempted on a site-by-site basis, interview protocols evolved across the sites. Prior to the first site visit to Shawnee Mission Northwest High School, protocols were developed for each personnel role type shown in Appendix I. Protocols for the first site visit were geared toward divergence and contained three sections. The first, role/responsibilities, sought to establish each respondent's perception of her or his daily duties and role in the overall organizational scheme of the school or agency. Next, questions regarding procedures and operations relevant to high school special education programs were specified. Sources for these questions were drawn from the literature. Also, questions regarding problems and issues as viewed by participants were developed on the basis of views expressed in the literature. In addition, some participants were asked to nominate other persons who might provide fruitful interviews during the second site visit.

Site visit two protocols were characterized for the most part by convergence. Second interviews were scheduled with respondents who were deemed elite by the research team on the basis of experiences during the first visit. Questions for most interviews were developed in follow-up to information uncovered from the first site visit. New respondents were presented with questions similar to those that were developed for their roles and that were asked during site visit one; they also were asked questions designed to expand on or triangulate site visit one data.

From the first two Shawnee Mission site visits, the research team discovered that the protocols contained questions that, if all were asked and answered, would have required two- to three-hour interviews per respondent. Thus, as the team became confident in their knowledge of what to ask, a composite protocol was developed and is displayed in Appendix III. This protocol was designed to be applicable to a variety of teaching and administrative roles, and to ensure that researchers asked pertinent questions yielding multiple viewpoints without unnecessarily shuffling papers and wasting interview time looking at protocols for "must-ask" questions.

This generic protocol was used for the first two site visits in Bradford and Philadelphia. Although it solved the problem of unwieldy protocols and interview time usage, the generic protocol left the researchers feeling somewhat unarmed during some of the interviews. Consequently, for the Slaton site, the team decided to adapt and streamline the protocols that were used in Shawnee Mission. A happy medium evolved and the number of questions became proportionate to the time allotted for interviews.

Students and parents were interviewed in each site. Their interview protocols were developed in relation to Halpern's (1985) model of transition. Questions probed perceptions of the role of the student's high school program in her or his preparation for work, independent living, and social/interpersonal relationships. Guidelines offered by Wyngaarden (1981) were helpful in the conduct of student interviews.

On-Site Procedures

The research team arrived at sites on the afternoon or evening prior to the first of the three-day visit. Team members ate an evening meal together to review schedules, and discuss last minute details. The side effects of that day's travel plus the prospect of three full days of interviews, and the accompanying intensity warranted a good night's sleep.

During the day, most interviews were scheduled back-to-back throughout the working day. Thus, team members were separated except in the case of a joint interview with a respondent or occasional passing words and glances with one another. Some interviews exceeded the allotted time. If travel between agencies was necessary, the schedule became even tighter. Inevitably, a few interviews needed to be rescheduled, some on the spot. Occasionally, predictability became a luxury as team members bobbed and weaved through the unanticipated.

Meals were the prime settings for debriefing between or among the researchers. Breakfasts usually consisted of last-minute planning regarding particular issues to probe, facts to triangulate, and other items of import. Lunches were taken together if at all possible. However, in some cases, researchers were split across various agencies during the day, and lunch together was not possible. In other cases, the researchers were invited to the inevitable school lunch. Here debriefing was not possible since participants shared the lunch. However, in such cases, informal interviews were conducted and much relevant information was discovered.

Thus, the evening meal became the primary debriefing setting. Debriefing allowed the researchers to share and contrast information and insights, triangulate certain facts, and discuss shared or differing perspectives and viewpoints. It also served as an opportunity for comfortable social interaction since, it must be remembered, any one of the researchers had probably been alone in his or her thoughts for the better part of the day even though that particular day may have consisted of six or more interviews.

Following the evening meal, researchers would review and "clean" their field notes from that day. This was considered an essential activity since field notes tend to chill if they are not reviewed and clarified as soon as possible after the interview. Cleaning involved adding details recalled from the interview but not written down during the interview, and simply writing some of the notes more legibly than had been possible during the actual interview.

Some of the researchers kept personal journals (PJ). Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend that each researcher keep a series of several journals, each aimed at a specific methodological purpose. However, for this study, those who did use journals maintained just the PJ. The PJ represented a synthesis of the various journals recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and typically included insights and working hypotheses specific to each site. It also included retrospective notes made regarding luncheon conversations with participants, observations made at particular schools, and the like. Generally, if a situation required that no notes could be taken at the time of occurrence, they were made subsequently as soon as possible and filed in the PJ for that particular site.

One final point about data gathering warrants attention. At the outset, the research team agreed that all interviews would be recorded via field notes only. Although many who conduct naturalistic research advocate the use of tape recorders, we felt that the possibility existed for tape recorders to be viewed as intrusive and hence undermine the goal of developing trust. Thus, we relied solely on note-taking. However, at many junctures throughout the study, we toyed with the idea of audiotaping interviews with respondents whom we considered elite. We even considered the use of videotaping. Though both of these data gathering alternatives continue to be compelling, we remained conservative and implemented neither.

Data Interpretation

Upon arrival back at the University, the research team engaged in the interim step between the collection of field notes and documents and the writing of the case study draft. The management facet of data interpretation was by far the most problematic aspect of this study.

Ideally, interview notes are to be unitized and categorized by the individual, and then categorized by consensus of the research team (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) as soon after the site visit as possible. However, two of the researchers quickly discovered that the conduct of NI and the responsibilities attendant to teaching at a major university are not complementary. For each site, there occurred a latency period between site visit and interpretation of the data collected during that visit.

Nevertheless, data were unitized prior to the next visit to the site. A unit of data contains a body of information that is sufficient enough to stand alone and not beg for additional details (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The unit could consist of one sentence or multiple paragraphs as long as its information is self-contained. The researchers struggled with this concept, and ultimately perceived the unit differently. That is, one researcher's unit was not necessarily a unit to another researcher.

Achieving consistency in data categorization became troublesome as well. Once unitized, the data were never categorized by consensus of the research team, and in some cases, were not categorized by the individual researcher. Two factors accounted for this problem. The first was a matter of leadership. NI requires clear and strong leadership by one member of the research team. As mentioned, the team ultimately designated one lead researcher per site. While this posture was comfortable for all concerned at the time, in retrospect it adversely affected consistency in method across the sites, particularly with respect to unit categorization. In sum, the team could not agree on the merits of or formats for categorization; thus, some of the data were categorized and some were not.

The other contributing factor was somewhat more positive in nature. Soon after the NHSS was funded, it was discovered that data base microcomputer software could assist in the management and retrieval of categorized units of qualitative data. During the Shawnee Mission study, the research team began to experiment with Data Star (MicroPro, 1982), a program compatible with Apple IIe computers. The pre-Data Star plan was simply to unitize the data and record them on 3" by 5" index cards (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data Star proved to be a potentially handy tool for the Shawnee Mission study; however, only Knowlton's data were entered. Thus, the Shawnee Mission study contained three forms of unitized data: Knowlton's unitized and categorized data via computer, Clark's unitized and categorized data on index cards, and Dorsey's unitized data that were referenced to his field notes.

Since the computer of favor in our academic department became the Macintosh, the NHSS consulted with a computer expert and found Filemaker Plus (Chadwick et al., 1986), a program compatible with the Macintosh that was faster and more capable than Data Star. However, the transition from DataStar to Filemaker occurred during the Bradford and Philadelphia studies which, as noted in Appendix II, occurred almost simultaneously. Only one of the researchers learned to use the program. Thus, to buy time, it was decided to forego the use of Filemaker for the Bradford and Philadelphia data and apply it to the Slaton data. Therefore, because of the timeline and the team's difficulty with the categorization process, the Bradford and Philadelphia data were unitized, but not categorized.

As can be seen in Appendix II, the Slaton study began during the time the Bradford and Philadelphia cases were being finalized. Thus the research team by now had found itself trapped by timelines. The team asked two doctoral students (Darrow and Guy) to assist with the Slaton study. As it turned out, the doctoral students' data were entered on Filemaker and the two researchers' data were not. With respect then to ideal data interpretation, all four case study efforts suffered in varying degrees thanks to problems related to inconsistency in procedures across sites and the implementation of computer-assisted data management tools.

Case Study Development

This section will discuss the writing and member-checking of the case studies for each of the four sites. Since there were inconsistencies in method across the sites, particularly with regard to data categorization and retrieval, the actual writing of the case studies became almost an isolated artistic process rather than the result of the systematic movement from data categories to case study outline to case study draft as called for by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The member-check, of course, is the major way in which the credibility of a naturalistic study is addressed. As pointed out previously, the third visit to each site was concerned mainly with this process of participants reviewing and critiquing the case study draft.

Case study development began with the generation by the site's lead researcher of a case study outline after data from the second visit had been unitized. Outlines were shared with each member of the research team for comment.

The first draft of the case study was then developed. Case study drafts were reviewed in-house and revised based on suggestions from the research team. Depending on the site and the lead researcher, anywhere from two to a half-dozen or so in-house revision cycles occurred. The cases followed a similar general structure: (1) a brief introduction to the site, (2) data and descriptions of the high school and the special education programs under study, (3) issues of concern to participants, and (4) a summary section synthesizing strengths and areas of concern pertinent to the site. At the point where the research team felt that it had a worthy draft, member-check arrangements were made with the site's contact person, and multiple copies of the draft were sent to this person for distribution.

In many respects, the case study of Philadelphia was unique. The difficulties encountered in Philadelphia were in some measure related to the point- of-contact issues raised earlier. Quite simply the research team never gained full entree to Manning High School and, frankly, the case study suffers because of that fact. However, if a single problem early on could account for all of the difficulties encountered with this site, it would be one of leadership, resulting in procedural inconsistencies. After the member-check and prior to the audit of the Philadelphia case, Knowlton assumed the role of lead researcher for the site. Therefore, there were considerable differences between the member-check and audit drafts of the case study. Not the least of the member-check draft's problems was that it focused on the vocational school serving some of Manning's students rather than on Manning High School itself. The team was faced with having a member-check draft of essentially the wrong case study.

We shall discuss how the Philadelphia case was revised for the audit draft in the following subsection regarding the member-check. We first describe the member-check process and the revision of the case studies for the audit.

The Member-Check

When the research team felt that it had a satisfactory draft of the case study for a site, the lead researcher and the site's contact person arranged for the member-check. Two levels of the member-check were arranged. The first level consisted of a group of readers at the site who were asked to read the draft and comment in writing regarding its overall credibility, erroneous facts and assertions, and any missing information. Comment sheets on which reviewers could note concerns per page and line were provided to assist in this process.

Every effort was made to compose this group with persons who had been interviewed and persons of similar roles who had not been interviewed. For example, if a resource room teacher who had been interviewed was designated as a member-checker, the research team would ask for another reviewer in that role who had not been interviewed. This goal was achieved infrequently since the two rural sites simply did not have enough personnel to fulfill the request. The Shawnee Mission and Philadelphia sites provided a few reviewers who had not been interviewed, but the research team had less influence on the composition of reviewers in these two sites. In circumstances where non-interviewed reviewers were available, they were not necessarily part of the desired role-type pairs.

The second level of review consisted of a subgroup of the first level reviewers who were invited to a two-hour member-check meeting. It was assumed that obtaining written commentary was insufficient. In a meeting, verbal interaction among member-checkers and researchers could produce insights concerning the case that may not have surfaced from written comments alone.

For each site, then, the research team came away with three forms of documentation to assist in the revision of the case studies. The first was the reviewer comment sheet. These were tabulated across reviewers for ease of reference during the post-member-check revision process. The case study drafts themselves served as the second form of documentation. Despite our desire for consistency and our requests that they use the comment sheets, some reviewers commented directly on their drafts, others on the comment sheets, others on both, and still others, on neither. The third form of documentation was the set of notes taken by the researchers during the member-check meeting and follow-up interviews.

The remainder of the third site visit involved follow-up interviews with respondents. These interviews concentrated for the most part on missing information and points of clarity. Frequently, the member-check meetings identified areas for which such information and clarity was necessary. In most instances, interviews during the third site visit were sufficient. For the Shawnee Mission and Philadelphia studies, phone interviews following the third site visit were necessary.

Following the member-check process, the task was to revise the case studies accordingly, and to ensure that each case was properly documented for audit purposes. Hence, after the third site visit, the member-check draft became the audit draft. Other than for the Philadelphia case, revisions toward the audit draft for the most part were clear-cut. Most of the revisions involved factual content, that is, numbers served, types of programs, and so forth. The time frame of each case study tended to create confusion. For example, if a case study encompassed the 1986-87 school year and was member-checked during the 1987-88 school year, respondents and researchers alike had to think in terms of a "stop action" picture. For one who is involved in the business of schooling, this is an unnatural thinking mode since, in schools, the action never stops.

The Philadelphia case study draft was revised totally, though the vast majority of its content was member-checked as part of the earlier version. Since the earlier version was on the word processor, moving selected content around was feasible. However, because an attempt was made to refocus the case on Manning High School, a small portion of the data used was not subject to the member-check. Nevertheless, much of the data reported in the audit draft of the case study was member-checked, albeit within a different version than presently exists.

The Audit Process

If one were to contrast NI's methodological counterparts to the traditional standards of internal validity, reliability, and objectivity, she or he would focus on credibility, dependability, and confirmability, respectively. The NI researcher's "method" includes the member-check process which attempts to demonstrate that her or his findings have credibility in the natural setting. Nonetheless, the traditional scientist would argue that one cannot have an internally valid study without objective and reliable data. In a similar sense, NI findings cannot stand the rigor of being deemed credible if one cannot depend on the methods for obtaining them, and actually confirm their existence in the natural setting.

The metaphor illustrative of the way in which one ensures dependability and confirmability is the fiscal audit (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In perhaps overly simplistic terms, the following example is offered. If an audit of the U.S. Department of Defense yielded the fact that 11 purchasing clerks deposited testimony asserting that ashtrays were purchased for six dollars apiece, the public's reaction -- despite the existence of the depositions -- might well be "that's incredible!" Yet, public examination of the trail of relevant bookkeeping entries and receipts and the ways in which they were obtained could render the depositions as dependable ("I can depend on these findings because I've examined the receipts and I know how they were transacted"), and confirmable ("I have enough information to locate the ashtrays' vendor if need be and consult with her or him"). Thus, the audit serves to document in rigorous fashion the existence of data supportive of the findings and the means by which those data were obtained and interpreted. Given not only the credibility, but also the dependability and confirmability of these findings, the public's reaction might be: "Yes, the Defense Department did indeed purchase ashtrays for six dollars apiece and that's a shame because we can get them for 89 cents plûs tax at Wal-Mart".

In keeping with the audit metaphor, NI findings are carefully documented by way of an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Working backward, the trail leads from supportive citations for facts, assertions, and interpretations contained in the case study through the units of data from which they were constructed and, from them, back to the original field notes and documentary evidence gathered on site. An independent auditor is charged with examining the audit trail, evaluating the study's inquiry procedures, and formally attesting to the degree to which the findings are dependable and confirmable.

The NHSS Audit

Appendix IV displays a key to the case study citations. Each case study documented its findings with combinations of these cites. In addition to documents, these cites included each researcher's unitized notes, categories of units, member-check notes, reviewer comment sheets, and personal journals. The supportive materials to which these cites were referenced were organized per case and were tagged for ease of access to the auditor.

All four case studies were audited together. The time frame for each case study (refer to Appendix II) necessitated the scheduling of the audit during the last month of the project's duration. In early May of 1988, the NHSS contacted Professor Egon Guba of Indiana University and requested that he conduct the audit. Guba developed NI and, along with his spouse, Professor Yvonna Lincoln of Vanderbilt University, has co-authored the definitive textbook on the subject. Furthermore, Guba had participated in a previous application of NI that focused on special education and, as such, would have been an ideal auditor since he has knowledge of special education policies and programs.

Although he declined the auditing role, Guba recommended Professor Cynthia Okolo of the Department of Special Education, University of Illinois at Chicago. Okolo's dissertation at Indiana

University, an NI study of the role of the resource room teacher, was honored as the "Dissertation of the Year" by the School of Education faculty. She had previous auditing experience, and has a knowledge of and commitment to the methodology. Moreover, she is a special educator with expertise in vocational special needs. Okolo's background and vita appear in Part Three of this volume.

In late May of 1988, Okolo was asked and agreed to audit the four case studies. In June, audit drafts of the cases were mailed to her and, in July, the audit process was scheduled. An orientation to the study materials at the University of Kansas was scheduled for half a day on August 7th when Okolo was to be on campus for other professional activities. The purpose of the orientation was to negotiate the audit task and to walk the auditor through each of the materials. Appendix V contains the result of the negotiation in the form of the charge to the auditor. The actual audit occurred on August 31 and September 1, 1988. The audit procedures and findings are detailed in the Auditor's Report located in Part Three of this volume.

Case Study Findings

This section reports the salient findings of the four case studies. The reader will note that the cases appear in Part Two of this volume in the order discussed herein. Our report of the findings first presents a discussion of policies and practices in each site that appear to have a positive bearing on high school programs for students with mild and moderate disabilities. We follow with those policies and practices that interfered with the design and delivery of effective programs. The reader is asked to consult the case studies for definitive treatments of the findings reported below, and Appendix VI which provides summary characteristics of the schools under study.

Policies and Practices that Work

If indeed one characteristic prevailed across the sites, it was that each school studied, whether in the final analysis one would deem its programs exemplary or not, operated within the framework of policies that varied in efficacy. These policies were rarely simplistic enough to be credited to (or blamed on) any one level of government, any one agency, or any one group of individuals. Rather, unique configurations of state mandates, local cultural contexts, and school and interagency capacity influenced practices at each site. Participants and researchers perceived some policies and practices as beneficial to students, and others as obtrusive. Below we present those viewed as beneficial.

Northwest High School, Shawnee Mission, KS.

Located in the Kansas City suburb of Overland Park, Kansas, Shawnee Mission Northwest High School is a large, modern facility that served over 1500 students in 1985-86. As described in the case study, the school district has enjoyed a reputation for exemplariness for many years. Human and fiscal resources appropriate for the effective delivery of special education at the Northwest High School are in place. During the time of our study, three distinct but obviously interrelated policies, and practices stemming from them, were noteworthy. They were: (1) local personnel talent and resources, (2) collaborative area vocational training, and (3) postsecondary employment for students with disabilities.

Local talent and resources. Exemplary facets of high school special education at Shawnee Mission Northwest High School nearly always were predicated by people. Partly because of its reputation, and partly because of the quality of its material resources, the district has been able to attract and retain talented teachers and other pupil personnel. These personnel were aware of current trends and issues in special education. They were aware of the surrounding community and its resources and opportunities. And perhaps most importantly, they were aware of students' needs and were committed to making a difference in the lives of these students, occasionally at the expense of comfortable interpersonal relations among themselves.

The major focus of our research efforts at Northwest High School was the Learning Center, a cross-categorical resource room serving students with learning disabilities and mild mental retardation. Four teachers staffed this classroom and team-taught various configurations of student groups. Two teachers were skilled in the teaching of learning strategies and worked with students with learning disabilities in subject matter areas, imparting appropriate strategies. Another teacher had developed a community-based curriculum consisting of functional academic skills referenced to emloyment, social interaction, and independent living. This teacher used this curriculum with both categories of students depending on their specific IEP objectives. The other teacher's specialty was in the area of employment preparation. She maintained an informal network of employers in the community and paved the way for part-time work for some of the students. These activities were the source of more than a modicum of consternation at the district level since there were district work study coordinators responsible for job development and placement. However, from the perspective of what is best for students, the expertise and community connections of both this teacher and the work study coordinators served the students, and the district's exemplary reputation, well.

Area vocational training. The area vocational-technical school was used by a variety of schools, including the Shawnee Mission district and a local community college. The options for comprehensive vocational and technical training for students with mild disabilities was impressive. Vocational training for them is provided in automotive areas, food services, cosmetology, drafting, electronics, graphic arts, heating and refrigeration, practical nursing, and welding, among other areas.

Postsecondary employment. Although national estimates vary, one can expect that anywhere from 50 to 80 percent of students with disabilities are unemployed. Worse, about 300,000 of these students leave school annually. Shawnee Mission Northwest's students with mild and moderate disabilities tend to gain employment at rates significantly higher than these national figures. Furthermore, their drop-out rates are relatively low. Certainly one factor accounting for these favorable rates is the health of the economy in the suburban Kansas City area. Many companies and potential employers have located their facilities in Johnson County. Other factors relate to the preparation for employment that students receive, including the aforementioned personnel talent and the vocational training options open to students.

Oxbow High School, Bradford, VT.

In 1986-87, Oxbow High School enrolled 500 students in grades 7 through 12. The high school serves students in Bradford and the surrounding communities of Orange County in eastern Vermont. The area is rural and isolated insofar as access to a major resource center is concerned. Boston and Montreal are the nearest major metropolitan centers. Vermont's largest city, Burlington, is 75 miles to the northwest. However, Burlington is not a comprehensive center for goods and services.

Despite its isolation, Oxbow provided several exemplary resources for students with mild and moderate disabilities--again in the form of personnel talent--that offset this apparent isolation. There was a commitment at both the local and state levels to the appropriate high school preparation of students with disabilities to transit successfully from school to adult life and work.

Local commitment to high school special education. Oxbow's special education program options included the Oxbow Vocational Center, located adjacent to the high school. The vocational school served students from several high schools in eastern Vermont including Oxbow High School and provided vocational training in food services, automotive mechanics, and building trades, among others. Like most vocational schools, it provided vocational training to students with disabilities with the assistance of set-aside incentive funds from the Carl Perkins Act. In the case of the Oxbow vocational programs, there were special needs teachers who were highly skilled regarding the life-career and transition skill needs of students with mental retardation, learning disabilities, and physical disabilities. These personnel obviously had an impact on those students and their families, but they also served as invaluable resources to regular vocational teachers and administrators.

Statewide commitment. Without support in the form of statewide policies and practices, the local talent evident at Oxbow would be operating in a vacuum. In Vermont, there appeared to be noteworthy and effective interagency collaboration among the state's Department of Education, the Departments of Mental Health/Mental Retardation (MH/MR), and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), and the University of Vermont (UV).

As Vermont service providers began to respond to Madeleine Will's transition initiative in the mid-eighties, it became apparent that no one agency could meet this initiative alone. Several UV faculty members led by Dr. Susan Hasazi realized that the state needed personnel trained in job development, analysis, and support. Through the auspices of a state and federally funded project, these personnel could assist local schools and regional VR and MH/MR personnel fulfill their roles with respect to school-based and postsecondary preparation of students for employment. Their project, "Transition", divided the state into regions designated numerically; the Bradford area became Transition III.

Transition III brought more talent to the area, dovetailing with local special education personnel at the Oxbow Vocational Center. The work of those at the school and those affiliated with MH/MR and VR became well meshed, thanks in no small part to Transition III. Students graduating from Oxbow, like their peers in Shawnee Mission, had favorable outlooks for obtaining and keeping a job. In fact, the job development efforts of Transition III personnel resulted in at least one job placement for every four employers contacted.

Manning High School, Philadelphia, PA.

Like large cities of its ilk, Philadelphia has a variety of social institutions that offer many opportunities for resource usage; but each presents a bureaucracy of labyrinthine proportions that can get in the way of one's exploitation of opportunities. Its school system follows suit. The School District of Philadelphia is comprised of seven sub-districts, each of which contains student and staff populations larger than any other district in Pennsylvania with the exception of Pittsburgh.

Manning High School is fairly typical of the city's high schools. It is a large, 40-year old structure that, in 1986-87, had an enrollment of 2700. Our study of its special education programs and services revealed two distinct advantages for students. One was specific to the region in which Manning's catchment area lies. Students in the area have the opportunity for comprehensive vocational training at the Brown Skills Center, a vocational school serving Manning and several other high schools in that portion of the city. The other advantage was city-wide and pertained to the large variety of public and private agencies, external to the schools, that served as resources assisting in the implementation of school-based special education programs and services.

Vocational training. The Brown Vocational Skills Center provided training in many skills and trades, including automotive mechanics, air conditioning, carpentry, drafting, childcare, and electrical work. Unique to Philadelphia was the scheduling policy for both nonhandicapped students as well as those with mild and moderate disabilities. In order to fulfill district and state graduation requirements, students were placed at Brown and their "home" high school (Manning) on an alternate week basis. Students would attend Brown for one week and return to their home school for a week, receiving a double-dose of the academic work missed while they were at Brown. The burden of these double periods at Manning was offset to a satisfactory degree by the prospect of receiving a comprehensive vocational education while meeting credit number and subject requirements for graduation.

For students with disabilities, Brown offered a well-trained, bright, and committed corps of vocational teachers and administrators. Students received appropriate classroom instruction and well-supported work experiences. The latter was due to excellent job-coaching and follow-up at work sites and to the presence of an administrator whose connections with business and industry groups outside the school paid rich dividends in the form of job placement options in the community and auxiliary instructional staff at the school.

External agencies and resources. The research team was struck by the large number of public and private agencies and advocacy groups whose activities and resources had a potential bearing on the quality of special education. There were, of course, social service agencies such as the Office of Mental Health/Mental Retardation and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. Each agency had a regional office in Philadelphia. There also were many business and industry clubs and groups which, as mentioned above, could assist in matters regarding transition given the proper collaborative initiatives on the part of school administrators.

Most impressive were the advocacy groups. If parental involvement in special education were to have a most favorable climate, it would be in Philadelphia. Philadelphia, as most special education historians know, was and perhaps still is fertile ground for legal advocacy on behalf of those with disabilities. The Public Interest Law Center, formerly headed by Thomas Gilhool (now Pennsylvania's Secretary of Education), is located there. The local ARC chapter is quite strong and active. There are also lesser known groups such as the Police and Firemen's

Association for Handicapped Children that provide assistance and resources to parents and students.

Slaton High School, Slaton, Texas

Located about 20 miles southeast of Lubbock, Slaton is a small cotton-producing town that, along with three neighboring communities, provides special education for its young people with disabilities through a cooperative organization, the Southeast Lubbock County Organization (SELCO). Slaton High School is a 33-year old facility that, in 1987-88, served 426 students in grades nine through 12. Though we focused primarily on Slaton High School, we included the other three high schools that participate in the cooperative organization in order to study SELCO's services for, and impact on, those Slaton students who were transported to one of these high schools for services. Most impressive among the policies and practices of SELCO and the area high schools were SELCO's leadership in regard to special education, the quantity and quality of high school vocational training options for students with mild and moderate disabilities, and the role of the regional Texas Rehabilitation Commission staff in local transition planning for students.

SELCO's Leadership. One quality of leadership, as contrasted with mangement, is a sense both within and outside the organization of positive movement; there is a consensus-driven mission, and multiple activities toward that mission are planned and executed often at an exhausting pace. This perception characterized the climate of SELCO. Organizationally, SELCO has a simple configuration. Its board members are the superintendents of the four participating school districts with the SELCO Director serving as an *ex officio* member. The districts provide special education programs and services through SELCO and share the costs on a *pro rata* basis depending on the number of students served per district. Though the four board members make policy decisions, the SELCO Director provides the leadership initiative to which the superintendents, thanks to well-placed confidence, are exceptionally receptive.

Given the Director's credibility with the superintendents and her leadership qualities, the impact on high school special education in the area was positive and effective. The Director is well-networked on the statewide level. For many years, she has served on numerous committees related to special education and is well aware of current trends and issues, particularly those regarding the transition initiative. The research team noted that between each of the site visits, there were considerable changes in local staffing patterns, future plans, staff perceptions concerning various local issues, and so forth. These changes were not capricious; rather they were developmental in nature. Nor were these changes necessarily good or bad as such, but rather a function of the evolution of program quality. They exemplified the Director's continual responding to the interaction between the needs of students and the necessary resources to address those needs.

High school vocational training options. Unlike the other three sites, Slaton had no comprehensive vocational school in the immediate area. Yet prior to their graduation from high school, students with disabilities were afforded an impressive array of opportunities for training. Each option is described in the case study. All were open to students with disabilities and to nondisabled students alike; and some were staffed with trained and certified special educators. Vocational opportunities in the Slaton area are skewed toward agribusiness. As such, the subject matter of the vocational programs we studied reflected the role of agriculture in the local economy.

The role of the Texas Rehabilitation Commission (TRC). The state of Texas realized early on that if the national transition initiative was to bear fruit, TRC would be required to take an active role in school matters, particularly with respect to planning for the transition of high school students into postsecondary training and services. A formal interagency agreement among TRC, the Texas Educational Agency, and the Texas Department of Mental Health/Mental Retardation was tendered and legislated two years ago.

TRC's approach then became the deployment of regional vocational rehabilitation counselors whose role is to work with high school special education staff in these planning activities. As is often the case, formal agreements can be a mere paper chase if the people implementing them cannot collaborate in a transdisciplinary fashion. The Slaton area was fortunate in that the TRC counselor assigned to that region and the high school special education teacher responsible for work study coordination developed an excellent rapport and working relationship. Their goals concerning students and the values underlying those goals were the same despite their differences in backgrounds and training experiences. Thus, their commonalities paved the way for learning about and appreciating each other's professional uniquenesses; and, of course, this relationship benefited their students and clients.

Policies and Practices that Pose Barriers

Each educational and human service agency has its growing edges, problems, or roadblocks that can interfere with that agency's full potential insofar as the achievement of its mission is concerned. Although we never completely understood what comprised the laundry list of exemplariness at any particular site, we did discover that exemplariness does not equal perfection. In fact, it would appear that if an agency perceives itself as perfect, it is probably adrift, lulled by the complacency of past achievements that at best are anachronisms and at worst are misleading to current and future clients. We have concluded that exemplary agencies share the same issues and problems as their more mediocre counterparts. It is their responsiveness in the face of unresolved issues that seems to distinguish their exemplariness. And so it follows that barriers in the form of the policies and practices to be discussed below reflect attempts at identifying and meeting these challenges rather than inherent and unalterable weaknesses.

Northwest High School

Despite the many positive program factors apparent at the high school and district levels, there were three problems that teachers and administrators continued to face during the time of our study. These were: (1) a less than adequate district-wide system for following students after graduation, (2) unresolved issues regarding the grading of students with disabilities, and (3) conflicts in program policy and direction relative to the roles of work study coordinators, prevocational teachers, and special education teachers with respect to the work-related experiences of students with mild and moderate disabilities.

Follow-up and follow-along of graduates. From a logical perspective, knowing what happens to graduates and leavers of a given high school can provide valuable insights about the integrity of the school's educational efforts. Yet, in general, schools know very little about their former charges. Most of the follow-up studies published in the special education literature reflect efforts by university researchers and state education department personnel rather than school district administrators. Although some school districts have systematic follow-up procedures, Shawnee Mission had just begun to address this task at the time of our study.

Grading and equivalent graduation policies. As described elsewhere in this final report, part of the NHSS's research efforts centered on a survey-based description of state graduation policies for students with mild and moderate disabilities. The researchers involved in that effort found that many states had invoked graduation credit and subject requirements that were equivalent for both nondisabled students and students with disabilities. Kansas is one of those states and, correspondingly, Shawnee Mission's students with disabilities graduated in 1985-86 by virtue of earning 20 Carnegie units, the same number and type of subjects as were required of nondisabled students.

With regard to students with disabilities, the process of IEP development offers useful flexibility in terms of the relationship between IEP objectives and graduation requirements. For example, a student classified as mildly mentally handicapped and whose educational needs include the development of social skills, and specifically conversational skills, could meet part of her or his English unit requirements through IEP objectives and instructional services related to these skills.

Theoretically, this is a fair and flexible policy. Yet, a regular educator cannot be blamed for wondering how a grade of "A" in conversational skills could be equivalent to a grade of "A" in Beowulf or Shakespeare. Although this issue was not pervasive at Northwest High School, it was expressed by some respondents. One could make the valid case that the issue is embedded within a broader dilemma related to attitudes and belief systems of those who have sound minds and bodies toward those who do not. However, at Northwest as well as other high schools where grading and credit requirements are standard for all students, the flexibility afforded by such a policy is tempered by the potential resentment that the policy can breed.

Work experience and work placement roles. Whereas the barriers described above were evident in Shawnee Mission Northwest High School but not uncommon to many districts, the conflict regarding special education teachers' roles in work experience activities and work placement was somewhat unique to Northwest High School. Three specific issues emerged. The first involved curriculum. The Learning Center essentially offered two distinct curricular thrusts: learning strategies and functional academics. In general, those students identified as learning disabled were taught learning strategies, and those identified as mildly mentally handicapped, functional academics. Since students with learning disabilities might be just as likely as their peers with mental retardation to enter the working world or postsecondary vocational training programs after high school, one could question the relatively exclusive curricular emphasis placed on learning strategies at the expense of vocational and life-career preparation.

But an even more compelling question arises with regard to functional academics: just what academic-based curriculum is functional for students who will transit from high school directly to jobs and varying degrees of independent living? The question of functionality in a particular academic curriculum domain appears more attuned with personal philosophies than with standards for acceptable curriculum practices. In other words, what is functional to one teacher may be folderol to another. And given the western world's rapid transition from industry to information as the basis of the economy, how do we know whether today's functional academics will remain functional tomorrow?

The second issue is related to prevocational training for students with moderate mental retardation. One could reasonably ask if there is such a thing as "prevocational" training. When some professionals proclaim a "place (in a work setting)-then-train" philosophy in the literature, one could even question the rationale for vocational training, let alone prevocational training. In the case study, we described Shawnee Mission's prevocational training efforts in great detail. They were well conceived and some participants saw them as effective. Yet, niggling questions remain. Some Shawnee Mission respondents wondered whether valuable human and material resources on behalf of students with disabilities were being used judiciously. And they wondered whether such entities as prevocational programs and sheltered workshops are not merely new modes for repeating old practices. Are these programs modern versions of age-old patterns of insulation and segregation of persons we consider mentally and physically incapacitated?

Finally, Shawnee Mission struggled with work placement roles. There were district personnel responsible for work study coordination. However, one of the Learning Center teachers, as mentioned, handled selected placements for some of her students in a "Lone Ranger" fashion. As one might well imagine, this practice met with disapproval on the part of district administrators. The perspective of these administrators notwithstanding, student placements orchestrated by this teacher for the most part were successful. With regard to follow-up information, this teacher possessed more in the way of quantity and quality of data than did the district. The major barrier herein did not appear to relate to students' quality of preparation, but to an absence of role-negotiation and role-release on the part of the pupil personnel involved.

Oxbow High School

As was our pattern with respect to the issues discussed in reference to Shawnee Mission, we will present policies and practices perceived as barriers by Oxbow respondents in a sequence moving from typical to atypical vis-a`-vis national trends and issues. Four barriers are presented. The first three, a coherent transition-based curriculum, personnel turnover, and multiple bosses are no strangers to many school districts, particularly in rural environments. The fourth, discrepancy in program quality, appeared somewhat idiosyncratic to Oxbow High School though it too is experienced by many districts across the country.

Transition-based curriculum. While there are some who view the transition initiative as the coining of yet another special education buzzword, most would agree that this policy has spawned significant efforts toward preparing students with disabilities for adult life and work. As one might expect, most of these efforts have been directed toward the high school and its curriculum. However, there are more than a few professionals who wonder what implications this initiative holds for the full, kindergarten-through-grade twelve (K-12), scope and sequence of curriculum.

Several Oxbow respondents shared this concern. The issue stated succinctly is: are we waiting too long? Children in the early grades are small and cute, and often the impact of their disabilities is not fully known. It is difficult to plan ahead because adult life is not yet seen by parents and teachers as a reality. As such, there was a concern among some respondents that valuable instructional time in the early grades was being frittered away with irrelevant curriculum and instruction. Too much in the way of education and training had to take place during grades nine through 12. The obvious solution would be a well-articulated, valid K-12 curriculum for students with mild and moderate disabilities in which career education, social skills, and other foundations for transition are taught in grades K through eight or nine. Then grades nine through 12 could be devoted to vocational preparation, independent living skills, and specific transition planning. As mentioned earlier, Oxbow is not alone in this dilemma, and until the field responds with the appropriate resources, transition preparation will continue in its consignment to the high school.

Personnel turnover. Most rural schools, particularly those in isolated and remote environs, encounter difficulty in retaining instructional and administrative personnel. During the time of our study of Oxbow, the district's Superintendent, its Special Education Director, and several of its teachers moved on to other jobs. There was some evidence to indicate that while Oxbow's turnover rates are not uncommon, they may be due to conditions specific to its cultural climate. Though most midwesterners and west coasters are somewhat ignorant of New England, the region is inviting to many in the northeastern metroplex, a corridor of Middle Atlantic cities from Boston south through Washington, D.C. During our visits, the lumber economy was recovering from its early-eighties recession while the economies of the northeastern metroplex and those along the southeastern coast continued to struggle. Therefore, there is every reason to suspect that states like Vermont receive transplanted city folk and southerners who are attracted to a relatively healthy economy as well as to New England's natural beauty.

Yet, as one Vermont observer asserted, Vermonters are, in a manner of speaking, aliens in their own habitats. As New Englanders, they are sensitive about their differences from "mainstream" Americans. Thus, it can be understandably difficult for persons from other parts of the country to assimilate themselves into the New England culture. Although this reasoning could help explain Oxbow's personnel turnover problem, it does not set Oxbow apart from other rural areas since some degree of parochialism exists in all regions of the country. It could be argued, for example, that it is equally difficult for a Middle Atlantic urbanite to be an accepted member of a small midwestern community. Regardless of the degree of uniqueness attendant to Oxbow's turnover situation, however, it remains a problem. Issues such as curriculum coherence, discussed above, will be more difficult to resolve without continuity in instructional and administrative personnel.

Multiple bosses. Most public school special education teachers work for two bosses: their building principals and their special education directors. The special needs teachers at the Oxbow Vocational Center worked for three bosses: the high school Principal, the Director of Special Education, and the Principal of the vocational center. Most teachers express some degree of confusion when faced with two supervisory lines. So it is not surprising that the presence of three can be overwhelming. The nature of this administrative configuration at Oxbow stemmed from the desire of the school district to equate the supervisory roles of the two principals so that one would not overpower the other. Since some Oxbow High School students with disabilities attended classes in both the high school and the vocational center, special needs teachers in the vocational center were accountable to both principals as well as to the Director of Special Education. Veteran special needs teachers like their colleagues with two bosses learned the subtleties of juggling multiple supervisory lines. However, the challenge to new personnel entering such a situation is fairly obvious. It would appear that supervisory roles could have been negotiated among the parties involved with some ease, though during the time of our visits there had not been any such negotiation.

Discrepancy in program quality. During the course of our study, we noted a fairly apparent difference in two of Oxbow High School's special education programs. As discussed earlier, the interagency collaboration among the school and various outside agencies assisted the delivery of special and vocational education services of high quality for students classified as mentally handicapped. Whereas curriculum, transition planning, and postsecondary options for these students were well articulated, the same could not be said for students with learning disabilities or behavior disorders who were enrolled in the high school's resource room program. Instead, there appeared to be considerable ambiguity in goals and outcomes for these latter students. Would they be "fixed" with tutoring in their regular subject matter courses? Will they continue their educations after high school? Or, like their peers with mental retardation, is the world of work their most viable postsecondary option? If it is, then quite a discrepancy exists between their preparation and that of their counterparts with mental retardation. The Transition III project described earlier served as a useful resource for this latter group of students and the personnel working with them. However, the resources of Transition III, which could have been useful to all Oxbow special education programs, were not accessible to the resource room's instructional personnel or students.

Manning High School

Two policies and related practices are presented with reference to Manning High School's special education programs. In this case both are germane to the problems of a large urban high school. They are the coordination of resources and the implementation of follow-up activities.

Resource coordination. As is the case with any big-city school system, one can be overwhelmed by its administrative hierarchy. As described in the case study, Philadelphia's bureaucracy is formidable. On top of that, when one engages in transition planning for students with disabilities, there are the bureaucracies of other public agencies with which to contend. Furthermore, the existence of private agencies and advocacy groups--all potential resources--presents the professional with a feeling akin to being a mosquito in a nudist colony; where does one start?

We were surprised by the perception of some respondents that they were unaware of many of the resources we had uncovered ourselves during our visits. Other respondents knew of resources but had difficulty coordinating their use, both within the district and across service agencies. Those most adept in the coordination process seemed to be native Philadelphians whose school-based roles allowed them the flexibility to be in the community, or at least on the phone, for a considerable portion of the day.

Follow-up. Philadelphia had a follow-up mechanism in place for its special education graduates and leavers. Individual initiatives with regard to follow-up were not discouraged. The problem with follow-up at Manning and in the school district as a whole was logistic in nature. At Manning, guidance counselors had the responsibility for follow up. From the outside, this task appeared clear-cut, albeit tedious. But, as one counselor noted, the sample becomes limited to those former students and their families who: (1) remain at the same address, (2) list their phone numbers, and (3) don't change phone numbers. The problem appears common to most cities: frequent moves, crank and obscene calls forcing some to go to unlisted numbers, and other glitches render follow-up efforts nightmarish. At worst, follow-up becomes a half-hearted exercise in futility, and at best it is conducted on the basis of a restricted sample.

Slaton High School

Although the two barriers to be discussed below are intimately related to the current educational climate in Texas, we suspect that readers in tune with the excellence-in-education movement will find meaning in these issues regardless of their location. Nationally, the past five years have seen a proliferation of reports critical of the state of elementary and secondary education in America. Several writers have drawn implications of the excellence movement for special education in general and for the transition initiative for students with disabilities in particular.

Texas has been in the forefront of policy responses to the excellence movement. Most notable is the "no pass no play" policy which requires all high school students to earn acceptable grades as a prerequisite for participation in extracurricular activities. Lesser known reform measures in Texas include more stringent graduation requirements, minimum competency testing for students, and periodic teacher evaluations that are among the most sophisticated appraisals of teaching performance ever developed.

These conditions attracted us to Texas. Many segments of the case study address specific influences of Texas's educational reform movement on the substance and delivery of special education. Below we present two barriers related to this movement. The first is in regard to the often delicate relationship between graduation requirements and special education curriculum goals. The second is the effect of reforms on how special education programs were used by Slaton High School.

Graduation requirements and curriculum goals. A major issue with which Slaton's special educators grappled is the effects of Texas's graduation requirements on curriculum for students with mild and moderate disabilities. One of the strong points of Slaton's curriculum offerings for these students was the variety of vocational programs available to them. Most special educators would agree that these students need systematic training in social skills as well as vocational preparation. Yet many Slaton respondents were concerned that graduation requirements would cut into vocational training options. As well, at a time when SELCO staffers were beginning to inject social skills curricula into their programs, these graduation policies stood at loggerheads with an emphasis on social skills training. The leadership efforts of SELCO's Director have resulted in the effective use of vocational programs and the beginning of what will be an integrated social skills curriculum for students. These leadership initiatives must now turn toward the reconciliation of the state's graduation requirements with the special needs of students with mild and moderate disabilities.

The use of special education. Frankly, we were somewhat alarmed at the prevalence of certain handicapping conditions at Slaton High School. While many among us continue to call for a revitalized regular education system in this country, we were finding that Slaton's special education resource room programs were serving a significant number of students labeled learning disabled. Upon a close examination of Texas's policies for the identification of students with learning disabilities, we discovered that it is possible to use clinical judgement as opposed to only discrepancy scores to arrive at the diagnosis of a learning disability. Therefore, we suspect that some of these students were classified by virtue of this clinical judgement rather than significant differences between achievement and aptitude.

Some respondents theorized that identification for special education services allowed many students who were having academic difficulties to receive the extra assistance needed to maintain passing grades and participate in extracurricular activities. From one perspective, this could be seen as legitimate practice. After all, a school has so many students, each with individual needs, and only so many instructional resources. If special education and regular education are to be one system, then why not use all available resources to assist all students? Other respondents noted that all minimum competency test results are published in local newspapers and become part of the public record. They posited that the percentage of students passing these tests is essentially a matter of pride (or concern) to Texas high schools. It is clear to administrators that, since students in special education can be exempted from taking minimum competency tests, some control over pass/fail ratios can be exerted.

The other side of the coin reveals another reality. Just what is the purpose of special education? For whom is it intended? If Slaton, or any other school for that matter, over-identifies students within a particular categorical group, are there not other students who could benefit from those services? What about the low achiever who does not engage in extracurricular activities? And what about students already in the resource room whose needs might better be met in a group that would be smaller in number were it not for the practice of over-identification? If we need special education for students identified as learning disabled, students who exhibit inappropriate behaviors, students seen as "at-risk," students who are bilingual, and students with gifts and talents, we could ask with tongue not entirely in cheek: for whom is *regular* education intended?

All special education programs will need to examine their missions in the face of the excellence movement. In Slaton, the leadership and talent evident to us from our study is in place to resolve the issue locally. Of greater concern, however, is the way the excellence movement is playing out in other schools. There is an obvious need to address the role and function of special education. Should all of education be special education? Or should special education simply be education? The questions sound similar, but they reflect fundamentally different perspectives.

A Concluding Remark

The methods and findings described in the foregoing sections of this part of our report reflect an approach to research that is somewhat foreign to most readers. We offer little in the way of numbers but a lot in the way of data. Moreover, we provide more questions than answers. Nonetheless, seeking useful answers requires one to know what questions to ask.

By explaining programs and issues concerning high school special education from the viewpoints of our respondents, it is hoped that readers will make the appropriate comparisons and contrasts vis-a`-vis their own particular contexts and situations. In this way, responses to the challenges facing high school special education will be the way they should be: tailored to the unique circumstances surrounding any one high school, any one program, and, most importantly, any one student with a disability.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS/RESPONDENTS BY ROLE TYPE*

Site / Role Type	SPED ADM	SPED TCH	SPED SUPPORT	REG ADM	REG TCH	REG SUPPORT	VOC ADM	VOC TCH	VR	PTS	STU	EMPL
S_1 Shawnee Mission (Interviews = 27) (Respondents = 29)	2	7	5	4	4	1	2	2		1	1	
S_3 Bradford, VT (Interviews = 33) (Respondents = 45)	3	10	9	3		3	6	1	2	4	4	
S_2 Phila., PA (Interviews = 30) (Respondents = 31)	4	8	7	2		1	3	3		1	2	
S_4 Slaton, TX (Interviews = 64) (Respondents = 72)	3	17	11	6	7	1		4	3	5	14	1
TOTALS (Interviews = 154) (Respondents = 177)	12	42	32	15	11	6	11	10	5	11	21	1

*Some respondents were interviewed more than once, and several interviews consisted of more than one respondent.

APPENDIX II: TIMEFRAME

Event / Site	S_1 Shawnee Mission	S_3 Bradford, VT	S_2 Philadelphia	S_4 Slaton, TX
Access Granted	11/15/85	2/1/86	3/26/86	3/1/87
SV_1	3/5/86-3/7/86	5/21/86-5/23/86	6/4/86-6/6/86	9/30/87-10/2/87
SV_2	4/9/86-4/11/86	10/1/86-10/3/86	11/12/86-11/14/86	11/4/87-11/6/87
SV_3 (Member-Check)	5/14/86-5/16-86	5/6/87-5/8/87	5/13/87-5/15/87	4/20/88-4/22/88
Audit Draft	11/25/87	8/24/88	8/24/88	8/21/88
Audit	8/31/88-9/1/88	8/31/88-9/1/88	8/31/88-9/1/88	8/31/88-9/1/88

Appendix III

Protocol Structure

I. Is there a plan for moving handicapped youth in school to adult community alternatives?

A - Role of state and local plans
B - Roles of personnel involved
C - Nature of individual transition plan

II. What are the nature, mechanics, and frequency of school-parent communication?

A - Needs assessment
B - Parent education programs
C - Parent information programs
D - Parent communication policies and activities for individual transition program concerns
E - Degree of family planning

III. What are the nature, mechanics, and frequency of school-adult services communication?

A - formal meetings
B - informal networks

IV. What kinds of pre-transition education and training programs are planned/in place?

A - local reference and combinations of social/interpersonal residential, and career/occupational skill domains in K-12 curriculum
B - balance in IEP goals/STOs addressing these domains
C - frequency and source of IEP objectives addressing transition skills
D - state and local graduation requirements

V. What parctices related to transition skill training are exemplary?

A - K-12 instruction that is increasingly community-based rather than school-based
B - Instruction that is increasingly functional rather than academic
C - Follow-ups of grads and leavers

VI. What are the availability and accessibility variables involved in postsecondary training alternatives for interpersonal, daily living, and occupational transition skills?

A - Postsecondary vocational/technical education (vo-tech schools, community college, private business, adult education)
B - Independent living skills training (rehab agencies, independent living centers, other public or private programs)
C - Interpersonal and social skills training (rehab agencies, independent living centers, other public or private programs)

VII. What are the availability and accessibility variables involved in residential and leisure alternatives in the community?

A - Independent living in apartments
B - Semi-independent living in apartments
C - Group home alternatives
D - Family care homes or foster homes

VIII. What are the availability and accessibility variables involved in employment alternatives in the community?

- A - Regular competitive employment
- B - Supported competitive employment
- C - Mobile work crews
- D - Sheltered enclaves
- E - Specialized sheltered work arrangements
- F - Specialized employment training options (JTPA, ARC, on-the-job training, targeted job credits, etc.)

IX. What are the availability and accessibility variables involved in generic services in the community?

- A - Legal assistance
- B - Medical services
- C - Financial guidance
- D - Transportation services
- E - Religious, cultural, and political activities
- F - Parks and recreation programs that accommodate or make special provisions for special populations
- G - Mental health services
- H - State employment agency services
- I - State vocational rehabilitation services

APPENDIX IV

Key to Audit Citations

Doc 1.7 = Document 1, Section 7.
EK 4.3 = Earle Knowlton, Unit Category Index 4.3
GC 3.0 = Gary Clark, Unit Category Index 3.0
DD 14 2a =Don Dorsey, Interview #14, page 2, unit A
GC SV1-1-1G=Gary Clark, Site Visit 1, Interview #1, page 1, unit G
EK, GC or DD with # refers directly to field notes as designated by interview number, e.g., #27. No specific unit is used to support the assertion.
MC RCS 4.7 = Member Check: Reviewer Comment Sheet, Reviewer #4, item #7
MC EK 2b= Earle Knowlton, Member Check Notes, page 2, unit b
MC 5 3b (Site 4, only)= Member Check Notes, Set 5, page 3, unit b
EK PJ= Earle Knowlton, Personal Journal

Appendix V

National High School Project/Case Study Audit
Charge to Auditor

1. Objectives of audit:

- To determine and attest the degree to which facts, assertions, and interpretations of issues contained in each of the four case studies are trustworthy. That is, are they dependable and confirmable? Can they be traced through the audit trail?

- To provide a critique of the Project's implementation of naturalistic methodology, and suggestions for improving subsequent implementation efforts.

2. Materials for reference and inspection:

- grant proposal
- case studies (Shawnee Mission, KS; Bradford, VT; Phila., PA; Slaton, TX)
- case study draft trails
- notes regarding member check processes and revisions
- documents and document indices per site
- unitized field notes
- raw field notes
- personal notes
- interview protocols
- working paper on methodology

3. Timeline:

- 8/7: Orientation to materials and negotiation of audit process & product (attestation report)

- 8/31: Auditor receives final drafts for VT, Texas, & Phila. cases

- 8/31 & 9/1 (1.5 days): On-campus audit

- 9/15: Attestation report due

Appendix VI

Summary of Case Study Characteristics

Site	Context	Case Study Time Frame	High School	Related Settings
1 (Shawnee Mission, KS)	Suburban	1985-86	Northwest HS n = 1500 Gr: 10-12	Corinth Prevocational Program Kansas City Area Vocational-Technical School
2 (Bradford, VT)	Rural Isolated	1986-87	Oxbow HS n = 500 Gr: 7-12	Oxbow Vocational Center
3 (Phila., PA)	Urban--Metro	1986-87	Manning H.S. n = 2700 Gr: 7-12	Brown Vocational Center
4 (Slaton, TX)	Rural, Small Town	1987-88	Slaton H.S. n = 426 Gr: 9-12	Roosevelt H.S. Cooper H.S. Southland H.S.

PART 2: CASE STUDIES

1. A Case Study of Special Education for Students with Learning and Behavioral Handicaps in a Suburban Kansas City High School

2. Special Education for High School Students with Educational Handicaps in a Rural Setting: A Vermont Case Study

3. A Case Study of Special Education for High School Students with Mild and Moderate Disabilities in Philadelphia

4. Special Education for High School Students with Disabilities: A Case Study in a Rural, Small-Town Setting in West Texas

A CASE STUDY OF SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING AND BEHAVIORAL HANDICAPS IN A SUBURBAN KANSAS CITY HIGH SCHOOL

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Post-Audit Draft

September, 1988

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Special Education at Northwest High School 2

Direct Special Education Services 3

Related Services 8

Northwest Support Services 14

Discussion and Conclusions 18

The Meaning of Graduation 19

High School Curriculum and Transition 22

Appendix 25

A CASE STUDY OF SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING AND BEHAVIORAL HANDICAPS IN A SUBURBAN KANSAS CITY HIGH SCHOOL

Introduction

In 1985-86, the Shawnee Mission School District enrolled over 30,000 students, most of whom reside in northeastern Johnson County, Kansas (Doc 3.1). Generally regarded as a metropolitan Kansas City "bedroom" community, the area has become increasingly more urbanized in recent years because of local growth in business and industry (Doc 3.1). More school district residents work in the area now than did 10 years ago (Doc 3.1). Although the suburban nature of the area may be diminishing somewhat, most would agree with its characterization as suburban as opposed to either urban or rural. Nonetheless, Johnson County continues its demographic transition from what was once a rural area to what eventually might be an urban area.

The school district's annual budget, like those of its counterparts around the nation, reflects increased pupil costs coupled with decreased state and federal support (Doc 3.1). Through earlier years of public largess, as well as recent fiscal retrenchment, the Shawnee Mission district has earned and maintained an exemplary reputation. It has received national media attention in addition to intermittent local and regional coverage. It uses local radio and TV spots to inform residents of events as well as to provide awareness of various programs and activities. At the bottom line, however, it has been vital people and their quality programs that have contributed to Shawnee Mission's excellence. Its special education programs are highly regarded in Kansas, having provided leadership responses to the emerging trends and best practices of the field. In the late '60s, working in conjunction with faculty from a nearby university and with neighboring districts, Shawnee Mission provided what now would be termed a "transition" curriculum for mildly handicapped youth. Twenty years ago, it was called "cooperative work study" (EK 1.0).

"We were on to some good stuff in the mid to late sixties," recalled Shawnee Mission's current Director of Special Education (EK 1.0). At that time, the Director was serving as the head of the district's work study program for youth classified at that time as educable mentally handicapped. The work study program was a federally-funded demonstration project that provided vocational assessment, training, and placement for these students (MC RCS 9.1). A series of follow-up studies showed favorable results not only in terms of work outcomes, but also in regard to independent living outcomes.

Shawnee Mission Northwest High School, like the district, is reputed for exemplariness. Its suburban context affords favorable expectations about the circumstances under which handicapped youth receive educational services, and about the options for living and working that are available in their communities. Moreover, talent on the part of special service staff throughout the district as well as at Northwest has been evident on a consistent basis for many years. In consideration of these factors, the major purposes of the inquiry were: (a) to examine the learning center and resource room programs for students with learning and behavior problems at Northwest, (b) to determine the status of curriculum and program effectiveness related to transition, and (c) to draw conclusions about relevant indicators of exemplariness found as a result of the inquiry.

Special Education at Northwest High School

Northwest High School served over 1500 students in the 1985-86 school year, and expected over 2000 in 1986-87 when the four current Shawnee Mission high schools reorganized into five traditional four-year high schools (Doc 3.1; EK 15; MC RCS 8.1). In the 1985-86 school year, Northwest served a total of 83 handicapped students (MC RCS 9.3). Special education services at Northwest are provided primarily through the resource room and the consultant teacher models. Students with behavior disorders (BD) are taught in the Behavior Disorders resource room, while students with learning problems (LP) and learning disabilities (LD) are taught in the Learning Center (EK: 13). Students in both programs are placed on an individual basis in required as well as elective "mainstream" courses (EK 13.3; MC RCS 8.2); however, alternatives for students can vary relative to many factors such as the sheer numbers of students and the working relationships among staff (EK13.3).

Services are also provided for students with other exceptionalities. These include a gifted program as well as any necessary Learning Center services for students with mild physical or sensory impairments (Doc 3.8.14; EK I3; GC19). Most students with hearing impairments receive centralized services at Shawnee Mission West High School (GC 19). Secondary-age students with moderate and severe disabilities are provided special services in other Shawnee Mission schools, such as the Developmental Center at Shawnee Mission North High School (GC 51).

A student with a mild or moderate learning or behavior problem has access to various combinations of three forms of services at Northwest. He or she may receive direct, district-managed resource room services in the Learning Center or the Behavior Disorders Resource Room. Secondly, there are related services available from the district in the form of prevocational and vocational education and work placements (EK 11.2; GC 4,5; DD 7).

The third form of services at Northwest is supportive in nature. These support services are delivered by guidance counselors, the district's social work division, and regular teaching staff. Counselors help with scheduling and other matters pertaining to individual students (EK 11.4). The district's social worker assigned to Northwest arranges for various interagency services, and provides services to individual students as needed, whether in the Learning Center or the resource room (DD #20). Regular staff work with handicapped students in academic courses, such as English and in elective courses such as industrial arts and home economics (EK 16.1; DD #4,#9,#26; MC RCS 8.6). Support services are available to all Northwest students--though, in reference to students with handicaps, they are provided with the help of mutually beneficial networks of relationships among district staff, various departmental staffs at Northwest, and the Learning Center and Behavior Disorders programs (EK 7.5, 7.6; GC 42; DD #14). The following major sections describe these three forms of services as they bear on the transition-related programming for students with handicapping conditions.

Direct Special Education Services

At Northwest, students classified as LD, LP, BD, as well as some students with physical and sensory handicaps are served directly via one of two programs: the Learning Center, or the Behavior Disorders Resource Room.

The Learning Center

The following description of the Learning Center is presented in relation to its organizational model, the general approach to services, staffing and programming, mainstreaming, and curriculum.

Organization and approach. The Shawnee Mission Northwest High School Learning Center is one of the district's five high school learning centers. In 1985-86, these learning centers served a total of 233 students (MC RCS 4.1). From the beginning of the implementation of the learning center concept, the philosophy behind it has been the provision of a multidisciplinary team approach for serving students with educational handicaps in a multicategorical, least restrictive environment at the home school (Doc 17). Although the organizational structure of the Learning Centers is fairly standard across the district, there are administrative factors that vary from school to school. At Northwest High School, the Learning Center is not recognized as a separate administrative division, such as Language Arts or Science (GC 18). Since Northwest de-centralized administrative responsibility in 1985, the Learning Center Staff had functioned as a team with direct accountability to the Assistant Principal (GC 18). The high school initiated a new divisional organization in the 1986-87 school year in which the Learning Center was placed in a division that includes guidance and counseling, the library, student health services, and other special services (MC RCS 11.1). The Counseling Coordinator serves as chairperson of this division. (GC 18; MC RCS 11.1, 8.3).

The Learning Center (LC) starts with the premise that a referred student's difficulties in school are primarily learning, rather than behavioral, in nature. This results in a dual-categorical population of students with learning disabilities or learning problems; the latter population typically is referred to as educable mentally handicapped. The Learning Center also will serve any physically handicapped student who needs special services related to accessibility, the scheduling of therapists, in-school services, and adaptive physical education and/or equipment (GC 19).

In 1985-86, the Northwest High School Learning Center served a total of 56 students (MC RCS 4.1). The primary goal of the LC is to provide appropriate educational experiences within the context of the district's high school graduation requirements. These experiences include participation in regular classroom programs, modifications of regular classroom instruction, direct instruction for specific skill remediation, and adaptive program instruction (Doc 17).

Professional staff roles. During the 1985-86 school year, four teachers staffed the LC, and 1.5 more positions were anticipated in 1986-87 with the assimilation of ninth grade students at Northwest (EK 15; MC RCS 9.9). The LC teachers have developed specialized but flexible roles, thanks to effective combinations of expertise and a tradition of role evolvement. Functionally, the teachers, each with specific areas of expertise, work as a team with evenly divided duties (GC 18; MC RCS 9.5). They enjoy flexibility in regard to their fulfillment of official teaching roles.

Staff responsibilities have been allowed to emerge naturally and democratically (GC 18). The senior teacher has responsibility for prevocational experiences and, with the Work Study Counselor, helps to arrange work-study placements for LD students (GC #27; EK 13.2.1). This teacher has maintained a network of informal employer contacts throughout her many years directly or indirectly involved in work study (EK 13.2.1). The second teacher is responsible primarily for community-based instruction for LP students (EK 11.3). This person also has served as a work-study teacher for LP students (MC RCS 8.4). The third teacher specializes in the learning strategy approach and works with LD students using this approach for mathematics and study skills instruction (GC 28; MC RCS 9.10). The other teacher provides instruction in academic content areas as well as in learning strategies such as study skills (EK 12; GC 2; MC: RCS 6.2). Overall, this individual and collective expertise in curriculum and methods dovetails well with individual student needs (EK #23).

Staffing and program development. District special services provide for IEP staffings and re-evaluations of Learning Center students by the school psychologist, academic and functional skill assessments by the learning specialist, and any necessary social work services (EK I3.2; MC RCS 8.5). High school staffings focus for the most part on IEP updates rather than on referrals or new evaluations (EK 13.2). Transition planning for juniors and seniors can involve additional professionals in staffings (GC 3, 49, 54). As IEPs become more oriented to the transition from school to work, data concerning vocational preparation (GC 49), and potential work study or vocational training placements (GC 54), become predominant in planning (EK 4). Northwest is considered by some administrators to be strong with respect to transition -- specifically, in preparing students with learning problems and learning disabilities for independent living (GC 2; MC RCS 2.1).

Mainstream placements. During the third quarter of the 1985-86 school year, LC students were placed in a total of 230 mainstream classes (MC RCS 4.9). Students with learning disabilities tended to receive more of their subject matter instruction in regular classes than did students with learning problems (EK 13.3). Overall, about 70 percent of these mainstreamed students received passing grades in these classes (MC RCS 4.9). Their success in mainstream classes owes considerably to the informal relationships among LC, subject-matter, and remedial teachers (EK 7.6; GC 17).

Moreover, successful mainstreaming ultimately depends on what best can be described as simply a good blend of sometimes divergent philosophies about what to teach (EK 12.0). Ironically, the benefits of Northwest's mainstreaming policies are not necessarily evident during the time students are in high school, rather they more often become apparent after the high school years as many former students function successfully in "normalized" community environments (Doc 27; MC RCS 9.11).

The role of curriculum. Students with learning problems receive functional skill instruction in community living (Doc 12). One of the LC teachers has specialized in providing community-based instruction, the curriculum which is emphasized particularly for the older LP students (EK 4.0; MC RCS 9.12). Yet, students also are taught their fair share of academic subjects within the framework of this curriculum. They have learned about the Great Depression and about the Middle East (EK 4.0). They have participated in the writing and assembly of the "LC Journal" (Doc 23), a student newspaper that has included articles researched and written by some of the LC students (EK PJ; MC RCS 11.2).

The philosophy behind these academically oriented units appears discordant with trends in curriculum for students labeled mentally handicapped. Yet, "why exclude these kids from subjects other kids get if you can find a way to teach it" observed one teacher (EK 4.0). The feeling is: academics are not really learned in a vacuum, rather they are as relevant as so-called "functional" topics are to a normalized life style. Discussions of Khaddafy and whether another Depression is imminent illustrate the social requirements of most any job (EK 4.0). Social skills that require knowledge of current events can be readily applied during "down-times" at work (coffee breaks, entering the job site, leaving the job site, etc.). Moreover, some LC staffers believe that the students have a right to be exposed to such information; and that by virtue of their labels, many students are deprived of the chance to learn and use the information (MC RCS 9.13). Although their academic work may or may not show short term benefits in regard to mainstreaming at Northwest, LP students' long term potential for community life is being enhanced.

The Behavior Disorders Resource Room

Unlike the Learning Center, which is a dual-categorical resource room, the Behavior Disorders Resource Room serves one categorical group: students with behavior disorders (BD), and it is staffed by one teacher. It does not appear that the BD Resource Room program and the Learning Center share resources or students. Careful screening of students by diagnostic teams, as well as accurate recommendations from regular teachers who refer students to special programs probably account in part for infrequent interaction between the programs (MC RCS 4.3). In addition, this lack of interaction may in part be the result of the absence in the past of collaborative skills in creating working relationships between the two programs (MC RCS 3.2). The description to follow briefly outlines the BD Resource Room's approach to mainstreaming and the supportive aspects of mainstream classes for BD students.

Mainstream placements. Each mainstream class has different requirements for placing students. English placements are done informally, while social studies placements require an application (MC RCS 3.3). Typical classes include remedial English, wood shop, and consumer math (DD 14-1-c). Because students often are enrolled in remedial classes, they have developed relationships with teachers who are remedial specialists, a factor which helps the students in two ways. First, they receive remedial assistance, and second, their social integration with nonhandicapped students is eased.

One difficulty with mainstreaming is the frequent and sometimes inaccurate assumption that industrial arts programs are appropriate for students with low verbal skills. Unless students can plan, think critically, and attend to safety, the placement is questionable (DD #24). Shops and other vocational education programs are beneficial services, but they must be selected carefully and not merely be pro forma placements for difficult students (DD 14-2-a).

The teacher of students with behavior disorders cited examples of how beneficial the wood shop program has been for her students. One student who graduated in 1985 was able to build furniture that he later used to furnish his own apartment. Another student, with the backing of the wood shop teacher, was able to secure a job with a furniture maker after school. This student not only was able to keep the job, but was promoted three times. Despite such success stories, the teacher cautioned that the severity of the handicap, particularly behavior problems, often limits the variety of instructional environments in which students can be placed (MC RCS 13.1).

Related Services

Northwest students with handicapping conditions also receive district-managed related services. Related services centering on transition can come in one of three forms: work study counseling, prevocational training, and vocational education.

Work Study Counseling

The following section presents a discussion of services provided by the Work Study Counselor. These services include work placements for LP and LD students, and prevocational and vocational training for students at the Prevocational Center at Corinth School and the Developmental Center at Shawnee Mission North High School. Specific descriptions center on staff roles, the role of the counselor, services for moderately handicapped students, and program effectiveness.

Professional staff roles. Prevocational training at the Northwest High School Learning Center is supplemented directly by a Work Study Counselor who serves Northwest as well as other district high schools. Typically, one person at each Learning Center is designated to be the prevocational teacher and placement coordinator (GC 51). At Northwest, two teachers assume this role, one each for the LD and LP students (GC #27). Among their other program functions, these two LC teachers work with vocational specialists to find employment for students enrolled in work-study, and provide job follow-up with employers of students on work-study programs (Doc 17; MC RCS 9.22).

This role sharing among the work-study counselor and the two LC teachers has resulted in a blend of specific role-related duties. The teachers handle many duties prior to placement. As part of her regular interviews with LC students, one teacher assesses interests and aptitudes of the various students (MC RCS 8.9). The teachers handle initial job skill preparation, while the Work Study Counselor interacts with employers and potential employers as the official representative of the district (MC RCS 9.23). Job leads come from a variety of sources, including the Career Center at Northwest, past and current employers, and former students who are aware of job openings (MC RCS 8.8).

The Work Study Counselor works with the Learning Center teachers as they share information on work-study placement opportunities and job development activities for new placement possibilities. The Work Study Counselor accepts responsibility for placement and follow-up of difficult cases requiring more intensive involvement (GC 51). Northwest's Learning Center has a somewhat unique situation that affects its relationship with the Work Study Counselor. The higher than expected number of students with low functioning levels has increased the number of referrals for assistance from the Work Study Counselor in placement and follow-up. For example, in the 1985-86 school year, there were seven such students in work placements that required special extended assistance on the part of the Work Study Counselor(GC 51). This resulted in an increased work load for the counselor. Because of the difficulty involved in job acclimatization for many of the students with learning problems and their need for closer follow-up on the job (GC 51), the overload has consisted of taking on or maintaining student cases, rather than consultation and phasing-out.

Work Study Counselors in the district perceive the need for more time to devote to job development (GC 50). Job development by Learning Center teachers assigned to work-study placement and follow-up is also of low priority because of in-class teaching and other responsibilities (GC 50). These factors result in some uncertainty about role priorities at Northwest. The current staffing pattern is working but is still evolving (GC #27).

Duties specific to the Work Study Counselor. The Work Study Counselor is involved in a variety of activities such as prevocational assessment, guidance and counseling, employer and public relations, maintenance of student records, follow-up of graduates, and program evaluation and development (GC #27). However, at the heart of the role is placement and follow-up with the most difficult cases. The work placement process starts at Northwest High School with the Work Study Referral Form (Doc 40). The following steps then are taken by the Work Study Counselor:

1. Interview students and their teachers.
2. Review Prevocational Report from the Prevocational Center at Corinth School.
3. Talk to parents.
4. Elicit recommendations for placement from teachers.
5. Match student with existing job openings or develop a new placement
6. Develop or redesign job using state employment office (Job Service) and/or Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) funds (GC 51), or other resources.

It is important to emphasize that the role of the Work Study Counselor is unique and involves a wide variety of duties and goes beyond mere work placement and coordination (GC 6). The major criteria for personnel selection for this role posed by the Coordinator of Prevocational Programs suggest that the type of person may be more important than the tasks to be performed (GC 7). Role-related criteria include:

1. Enthusiastic personality.
2. Ability to present a student's case persuasively.
3. High energy level.
4. Willingness to work all hours.
5. Ability to meet and work with people.
6. Dedication and commitment to the training of students with special needs.
7. Knowledge of what the job is about (GC 7).
8. Professionalism, tact, and communication skills (MC RCS 9.26).

Services for students with moderate handicaps. Job development and/or job modification is important for low functioning students and is typical for moderately mentally handicapped students (GC 51). Students who live in the Northwest High School attendance district are transported to the Developmental Center for their educational program. In 1985-86, eight students from the Northwest attendance area were served at the Developmental Center (GC 51). Students at this center receive training in personal-social skills, daily living skills, communication skills, functional academics, and prevocational skills. The summer program at the Developmental Center is a supported work training program based on the trainer/advocate model (GC 51). Community work placements for this group are available and used (GC 48).

Program effectiveness. The success of the work study program is reflected in graduate follow-up data (Doc 27). The Work Study Counselors attribute the success to the training students have received in the Learning Center (GC 29), the excellent support from state vocational rehabilitation services (GC 47), the Targeted Job Tax Credit employer incentive program (GC 51), the excellent working relationship with the local JTPA program (GC 51), and the Johnson County Transit Special Transportation Services (GC 51; Doc 36). Still, the Work Study Counselors at Northwest High School and the Developmental Center believe that more work sample sites (unpaid in-school and community work experiences) and more opportunities to get students ready for placement earlier are needed. One Work Study Counselor stated, "Some of our students who have been fired from jobs need more work sample experience before being placed in community employment" (MC RCS 1.5).

Prevocational Training

The Prevocational Center at Corinth School is designed primarily for assessment and training of junior high level students with educational handicaps. Following is a description of these services with respect to the role of the coordinator, assessment, training, work sampling, work-study, and the role of JTPA.

Role of the coordinator. The Coordinator of Prevocational Programs is responsible for planning and implementing prevocational programs, personnel selection, personnel supervision, transportation and budget management for all five Shawnee Mission high schools and the Prevocational Center at Corinth School. The Coordinator is also responsible for planning and obtaining vocational training services from the Kansas City Area Vocational Technical School (KCAVTS) (GC 1). Specifically in relation to Northwest High School, the Coordinator supervises the prevocational aspects of the Learning Center program through the Work Study Counselor, who plans and supervises transportation for students from Northwest High School to Corinth School for prevocational assessment and/or training, and coordinates student placements at KCAVTS (GC 1).

Assessment component. The assessment component at the Prevocational Center offers a one-semester, one-hour-per-day Work Skills Evaluation Class for students in Shawnee Mission's junior and senior high schools who have special prevocational needs. The purpose of this class is to give students an opportunity to explore a wide range of hands-on skills that they might encounter in practical arts classes, vocational education classes, and employment. At the same time, the teacher/evaluator is assessing the students in the following areas: (a) the amount of assistance they require to complete the tasks, (b) the amount of time required to complete the tasks, (c) the quality of performance, and (d) interest in the task. These hands-on tasks are in the general areas of business, home economics, industrial arts, and manipulatory skills (Doc 58).

Results of the evaluation are used for making prevocational or vocational training placement recommendations. For junior high level students the alternatives are regular practical arts class placement or recommendation for prevocational training for one semester at the Prevocational Center. For high school students the options include regular practical arts, in-school or community work samples, work-study placement, or specific vocational training at the KCAVTS (GC #27). At the end of each quarter during the semester course, a summary report is prepared and sent to learning center teachers and parents. These reports can be used to document prevocational and vocational strengths and weaknesses for IEP planning (Doc 58; GC #27).

Training component. The training component of the prevocational program at the Prevocational Center is designed to (a) evaluate attitudinal and motivational levels of students, and to begin working on the development of these areas; (b) provide prevocational skill training in basic work habits and manipulative skills; (c) provide instruction in job-choice, job-seeking, and job-application skills; (d) provide opportunities for growth in assuming responsibility, self-confidence, decision-making, and problem-solving; and (e) basic skills in transportation use, money handling, grooming, and social skills (Doc 58; GC #27).

Although most students referred to the Prevocational Center are at the junior high school level, any student at the high school level who has missed the opportunity for placement at the Prevocational Center or who manifests a need for re-evaluation and/or additional prevocational training may be eligible for placement (Doc 58). The district's referral system is used for teacher or parental referrals relative to the components of the prevocational program. There are standard forms for referral, assessment, parental and employer agreements, and progress reports are used systematically in case-management fashion (GC #27). In particular, teachers and work study counselors use the Checklist for Community Job Readiness to assist in any prevocational or work placement decision. The checklist, administered up to five times before and during the placement, provides on-going data regarding student progress and decision-making data regarding the appropriateness of the placement (GC #27). Appendix A contains the checklist.

Some of the LP students from Northwest have been referred to the Prevocational Center for the work-sample program (GC #27); however, the Prevocational Center generally gets very few referrals from Northwest High School (GC 46; MC RCS 9.27). The Work Study Counselor stated, " A few students are in need of additional prevocational training. Job placements would be more appropriate and successful if they were receiving this" (MC RCS 1.8). Although some of the Learning Center teachers at Northwest see the Prevocational Center as a resource, they feel it should be used only in very special cases because of the stigma accompanying its location in an elementary school and its junior high school curriculum level. They also believe that the inconvenience in regard to lost time and travel distance may not be worth the trade-off in many cases (MC RCS 9.27).

Work sampling. Work sampling is another component of the prevocational program. Students who have completed the prevocational training class at the Center, or who demonstrate readiness for beginning community-based job training, "sample" two or more jobs at school or in the community on an unpaid basis for about two hours a day. Students work in a placement setting for nine weeks, then rotate to another setting (GC #27; Doc 58). The experience is used by the prevocational programming staff for situational and on-the-job prevocational assessments (GC #27).

Work-study. Work-study is the final phase of the Prevocational Center's continuum. It is a community-based program designed to aid high school special needs students in acquiring occupational skills in real jobs. Students are paid wages and also receive high school credit for their supervised part-time work. Seniors in their second semester may work full-time (GC # 27; Doc 58).

Role of JTPA. Northwest's work-study program uses the resources of the local JTPA program to provide work experience training, job try-out funds for private sector placements, and leads for potential job development efforts (GC #27). Job try-out is a new funding innovation in which the employer is encouraged to hire the worker permanently through full-salary payments from JTPA for up to 500 hours of employment. Work experience funding is partial salary payment in public and private non-profit work situations. About 10 students from Northwest High School were given a 24-hour Pre-employment Skills Training Class, then placed in work experience or job try-out training during the 1985-86 school year (GC#27; Doc 58).

Vocational Education

Vocational education alternatives for students in both the Learning Center and Resource Room were limited in 1985-86 to a restricted number of vocational courses at Northwest High School and the KCAVTS. For the few LC students who select KCAVTS, the Work Study Counselor completes monthly evaluations of their progress (MC RCS 1.9). Those referred to KCAVTS have access to either those regular vocational training areas that are appropriate to their interests and abilities, or the Special Needs Vocational Program (GC 56, 57). The regular vocational training area options include such programs as Auto Body, Auto Mechanics, Building Maintenance, Building Trades, Clerical, Commercial Art, Commercial Food Service, Cosmetology, Drafting, Electronics, Graphic Arts, Heating and Refrigeration, Medication Aide, Practical Nursing, and Welding (Doc 46).

The Special Needs Program combines exploration, assessment, and training. Special needs students rotate through three areas: Foods, Commercial Laundry, and Trades and Industrial Training. Additional exploration and assessment are available for some students in Welding and Auto Body (GC 57). Special needs students are at the AVTS for one-half day, five days per week. An initial evaluation period for one week provides the staff additional information beyond the AVTS Referral Form (GC 54; Doc 41). If the one-week evaluation shows readiness or special aptitudes, recommendations are made for a regular vocational training area. If not, extended exploration, assessment, and training in the Special Needs Program is recommended. Once placed in a program, the teacher at Northwest who carries the student on her class list is informed and involved in a support role (GC 56).

In 1988-89, the Shawnee Mission district, along with five other districts in Johnson County and the county's community college, will provide vocational education programs through the newly established Johnson County Area Vocational Technical School. The county-wide AVTS will include three attendance centers (MC RCS 10.11). The Superintendent of Schools wants a unique vocational school approach, including programs in performing arts, link-ups for gifted students with business and industry, and the traditional vocational areas. There is a proposal before the planners that the new vocational schools have "graded" vocational training in every area, e.g. entry-level through specialized skill levels. Response to this proposal during the '85-86 year had been positive (GC 5).

Northwest Support Services

Indirect supportive services available to all Northwest students can be particularly helpful to students with handicapping conditions. Support services include guidance and counseling, district-managed social work, and regular education through mainstreamed placements.

Guidance and Counseling

All students are assigned to a guidance counselor who meets with his or her students individually at least twice during the academic year (EK 16.2). As a result of the 1986-87 reorganization, seven counselors served Northwest students (EK 16.2). Generally, services for students with handicaps tend to be related more to scheduling than to academic achievement or personal concerns (GC 13). However, most guidance counselors view their role with handicapped students as no different than that for nonhandicapped students with respect to personal counseling (MC RCS 3.4). Career counseling, focusing on the various post-secondary options open to a student, is also provided through the Career Center at Northwest (DD #24).

When formal, individual services are necessary, informal contact with special education staff helps to pave the way for delivery of formal guidance services (EK 17.2). For example, at times, some handicapped students have somewhat inflated notions of career options (DD #24). In such instances the counselor, special education teacher, parent, and student can help each other form more realistic aspirations (EK 17.2; MC RCS 10.2).

Social Work

The social worker serves seven different schools and 12 special education teachers (MC RCS 5.1). The top priority is crisis-management, usually for students with behavior disorders (MC RCS 5.1). The social worker attends all initial evaluations and the three-year follow-up evaluations, providing adaptive behavior evaluations (DD 20-1-a). He or she also coordinates home-school communications and outside-agency services (MC RCS 5.1).

If an IEP requires it, the social worker will provide direct services to students. For example, for LP students, the Northwest social worker has conducted programs attempting to build self-esteem (DD 20-2-a). In those cases where personal problems need more intensive intervention, the social worker helps arrange for clinical services with a psychologist or psychiatrist, and maintains contact with the particular therapist (DD 20-2-a).

The social worker also engages in joint planning for some work placements with the work study counselor (MC RCS 1.1). When a student is placed, the counselor conducts weekly checks during the first month the student is on the job, and monthly checks in follow-up. The counselor and social worker maintain communication as needed concerning the student's progress (MC RCS 1.1). In addition, the social worker provides parents with information about outside agencies, most commonly in reference to vocational rehabilitation (DD 20-3-a).

Regular Education Support Services

High school teachers make critical contributions to special education as students approach the transition from school to adult life. Mainstreamed Learning Center students tend to cluster in certain classes with certain teachers (DD 24-2-a), which means that a few regular classroom teachers can have a significant influence on these students' transitions.

Learning Center students often are placed in remedial classes offered by regular high school departments (MC RCS 8.7). Remedial English is one such class that, in 1985-86, was taught by one of the first regular classroom teachers to take on mainstreamed students (DD #26). This teacher's load during 1986-87 included two sections of remedial English and two sections of English for college-bound students (DD #26). Her remedial classes have included between eight and 10 students from the LC and the BD Resource Room (DD #26).

The teacher indicated that she often takes more LC students than normally would be required because of the support from the LC teachers. This support has included individual work and assignments in the LC that parallel students' English assignments (DD #26). The basic philosophy of mainstreaming practiced by the English teacher involves frequent parental contact (often initiated by her), and the assumption that nonhandicapped students serve as role models for their handicapped peers (DD #26). "The more we expect, the more the kids achieve" (DD #26). The individual support and parallel assignments from the LC help students to meet these expectations by allowing them to achieve success academically and reduce their intimidation by the sometimes higher academic levels of their nonhandicapped peers (DD #26).

In addition to remedial classes, wood shop and home economics have relatively large proportions of special students in comparison to other classes (MC RCS 8.7). Students appear to see a need for the practical skills of home making and job preparation. It also may be that home economics and wood shop are seen as appropriate placements for some students since the demands on verbal and written skills are somewhat lower than are the demands of academic core classes.

At Northwest, there is one wood shop teacher. Working relations between the shop teacher and the LC staff are characterized by communication, cooperation, and mutual professionalism (DD 4-1-a). The shop teacher observed that the LC staff " ... bend over backwards for their kids," and demonstrate commitment to their students and a willingness to work with other teachers, as evidenced by frequent visits to the shop to observe students and work with the teacher (DD #4). If the shop teacher reports that a student has a problem, an LC staff member will observe in the shop, then take the student to the shop office for a discussion on preparation for class, motivation, following directions, and an attitude of cooperation that is expected in class and the workplace (DD #4).

The shop teacher feels that this support is very effective. If a student is cooperating but still having difficulty, an LC staff member frequently comes to the shop to work with the student on the equipment. This has also worked well, primarily because the LC staff were willing to be trained on shop tools and techniques, and because the wood shop teacher was willing to train the LC staff and allow them to teach in his shop. The shop teacher, a veteran of 25 years of teaching, feels he has learned by watching the LC staff work (MC RCS 12.2). "They've trained us; consequently, we do a better job" (DD 4-1-b). In general the LC students come to the shop well prepared and well motivated.

The home economics teacher has had similar experiences. She has enjoyed the cooperation of the LC staff, who listen to her concerns and respond to them. When one student needed help in a difficult clothing class, an aide from the Learning Center attended the class and provided the student with the necessary assistance (DD 9-1-b). This consistency in approach was seen by the shop and home economics teachers as characteristic of the LC. The cooperative work of special and regular education teachers assists students in succeeding in mainstream classes, and contributes to the willingness of regular teachers to work with LC students (DD 4-1-c).

Despite these cooperative relationships, the fact remains that special students have a limited number of classes available for mainstreaming. They tend to take remedial sections of English and math, and congregate in industrial arts and home economics (DD 24-1-b). This has caused the concern that some teachers will become overburdened with special students (DD #24,#19). The home economics teacher noted that when the proportion of special students in a regular class hits a "critical mass", the class itself becomes stigmatized, and regular students drop it to avoid being identified with a special class (DD # 9). Home economics, an elective and thus competing for students, sometimes will experience low enrollments for this reason. The home economics teacher has discussed this with the LC staff. Enrollments in home economics by LC students were reduced in response to this concern (MC RCS 9.21).

With respect to their social adjustment in school, many special students feel no stigma over their placements, and some fit in well with other students. It appears that this is particularly characteristic of LD students (EK 13.1). According to the shop teacher, many Learning Center students associate with regular class students, and some LC students excel socially (DD 4-1-f).

The home economics teacher observed, however, that some special students look different and may inadvertently call attention to their physical differences; some students will tease anyone who is different (DD #9). Furthermore, some special students get attention by acting inappropriately (DD 9-1-b). The shop teacher added that there is some stigmatization of special students, and some of the special students feel they are a separate breed (DD #4). According to another teacher, LP students tend less to initiate or receive social contact from nonhandicapped students than do LD students (EK 13.1).

Discussion and Conclusions

The following findings and issues are presented so that readers might view the district's special services operations at Shawnee Mission Northwest High School in light of the concern for high school special education leading to transition. The issues are selectively identified and do not reflect an exhaustive analysis, nor do they imply priority. Rather, they serve as perspectives on one local response to concerns that essentially all school districts face in the process of implementing educational policy -- in this case with respect to students' transition from school to adult life.

We present and discuss two major sets of findings and issues that emerged from our visits with district professionals, and our analysis of documents provided to us by some of those interviewed. The first is related to the meaning of graduation for students with handicapping conditions. What does it mean for them, functionally? Do they get jobs? What do we know beyond the numbers about the quality of their lives? The second set of findings addresses the contribution of curriculum to the transition process. Curriculum here is considered in the broad sense with reference not only to the nuts and bolts of instructional programs, but also to the available continuum of district and building services that actually form the curriculum for any one student at Northwest. We ask: how does the curriculum affect transition?; how can it contribute to a "normal" life?; and how can staff resource networks help form appropriate curriculum for individual students?

The Meaning of Graduation

Kansas has mandated credit number and subject requirements that Shawnee Mission meets or exceeds in awarding any one student, handicapped or not, a diploma certifying him or her as a high school graduate. Current requirements at Northwest are 20 units. Twenty-three units will be required for 1989 seniors (Doc 1.1.9). These units must be earned per area as follows: language arts (4), social studies (3), mathematics (2), science (1), physical education (1.5), and electives (8.5). For 1989 seniors, the break down is the same, with the addition of 1.5 elective units and a .5 unit in computer education. In 1990, seniors will be required to have earned a .5 unit physical education credit specifically in health (Doc 1.1.9). Although minimum competency tests were given in 1985-86, they were not required for graduation (EK 18). Subsequently, Kansas has required the tests for handicapped students, provided that students take the tests at a level consistent with their reading grade levels.

To graduate, students with handicapping conditions and nonhandicapped students must meet the same subject and unit number requirements (GC 21). Learning Center students must earn these credits in the same proportions as nonhandicapped students; however, they may be enrolled in regular mainstreamed classes, remedial classes, adaptive physical education, and Learning Center classes as alternatives that can satisfy the requirements (GC 21).

In contrast to several states that grant different diplomas to handicapped and nonhandicapped students, Kansas policy regards the diploma in terms of the aforementioned criteria for all students. At the same time, Shawnee Mission regards handicapped students' achievement of the required credit units as relative to a curriculum that, in substance, is different from that of many non-handicapped students (GC 21). At first glance, it might appear paradoxical that, on the one hand, the district grants diplomas in line with the state's non-differentiation requirement, and, on the other, it provides considerable latitude in program content that can satisfy the requirement (EK 14). However, this local policy creates programming flexibility on the part of special education teachers and district administrative and support staff. In most cases, a handicapped student at Northwest is afforded services that lead to the same diploma granted a nonhandicapped peer, while preparing him or her to make specific adjustments to the demands (and comforts) of post-secondary training, living, and working. This policy is consistent with the district's overall pluralistic mission (Doc 3.1), and Northwest's philosophy of student achievement of appropriate curriculum content (EK 14).

Several staff members raised concerns about fairness when grades for handicapped students are compared to those for nonhandicapped students (DD 9-1-d; EK 14). An expression of this concern came from one teacher, who felt that special education students have better grades than students who took courses such as biology, history, or algebra. The teacher believes that some form of differentiated diploma may be the answer, provided there is nothing in that system degrading to handicapped students (DD 9-1-d). However, other teachers have different perceptions regarding grades. Mainstreamed special students typically do not have inflated grade point averages (DD #26; MC RCS 9.29); indeed, nearly a third of the LC students failed mainstreamed classes in the third quarter of the 1985-86 school year (MC RCS 4.9). Also, it is certainly possible that a few special students earn well-deserved good grades despite views to the contrary.

In policy, graduation for handicapped and nonhandicapped students in Shawnee Mission is the same. In outcome, useful information about post- secondary life for the former can be elusive and equivocal, not only locally (EK 17.0, 12.1), but nationally as well. The questions asked everywhere are these: do these young people acquire and maintain gainful employment?; do they live in satisfactory residences?; and do they socialize with friends and family?

It is in terms of these questions that local perceptions vary. Yet providing answers to these questions that are useful and applicable to the widely diverse personnel who serve handicapped students is essential to effective, flexible transition programming. Keeping track of former students with handicapping conditions appears more a separate, special education matter than a part of comprehensive district-wide activity (EK 17, 12.1). The latter would produce a comprehensive data base from which district and Northwest staffers could base their practices and their requests for resources. The former places a burden on each personnel role group conducting separate follow-ups, whether they be formal or informal efforts.

The issue, then, of what graduation means in the functional sense is perceived differently by different personnel groups. On-going individual contact by building-level staffers allows for the accumulation of more quality-of-life information concerning individual students. Yet, the "broad-picture" information resources that can keep these personnel aware of trends in employment and living conditions in Johnson County can be lost without the comprehensive perspective produced by a district-wide follow-up system. Moreover, district-based special education personnel must keep track of employment rates and thus do not have time to collect other relevant employment data and quality-of-life information. And some staffers are aware of follow-up information only in terms of individual crisis-management circumstances (EK 17).

Although school-wide follow-up efforts are notorious for low response rates, they nevertheless could provide each of these groups with a perspective of its own programs' contributions to the transition of handicapped students. Each could focus on its own interests in the data, e.g. employment rates, job market trends, living conditions, social networks, and so forth. Each could be relieved of various data-management burdens. All could learn more about the effects of their programs and practices and what graduation means for handicapped students.

Post-Graduation Adjustment

At present, data on employment and training for Shawnee Mission graduates with handicapping conditions are maintained formally at one, three, and five-year intervals by the work study counselors (GC 44). Data indicate that roughly 70 percent of 1984 mildly and moderately handicapped graduates were employed (GC 44; Doc 27). Most of these employment settings are competitive, thanks to the employer contacts and relationships maintained with the efforts of the Work Study Counselor and the LC teachers (EK 11.3; GC 6). On occasion, a few students are placed in non-competitive settings (GC 22; EK 17.0). Not only are drop-outs infrequent (GC 23), about 5 percent of Shawnee Mission graduates from special education go on to college or vocational training (GC 22; MC RCS 11.3). Compared with national figures, these local data are quite favorable.

Teachers and work study counselors keep track of graduates in more ways than recording employment percentages. In the case of some students, both personnel groups contribute to prevocational and vocational development during the early high school years; they train and prod the transfer of specific skills during work study; and, through their employer contacts, they watch and participate in successful adjustments to competitive employment after graduation. These professional experiences are instructive as well as illustrative of exemplary practice. Practitioners can analyze what goes right, and wrong, in any individual case. From such analyses, they are informed as to what must be done differently for the next individual case. The information that is meaningful for this process goes beyond employment or drop out rates, per se. It relates to the graduate's life in his or her home and community--settings in which good or poor adjustment may be independent of whether or not one is employed.

Although employment and drop out rates for them are favorable, Northwest High School's handicapped graduates encounter other adjustment challenges. Many seek to continue living at home (EK #23). When the home setting has been the source and reinforcer of pathology in the form of overprotection, abuse and/or neglect (GC 25), employment takes a back seat to overall life style as a concern. Even without home pathology, some graduates experiencing school-to-work transitions live at home with their single parents who are facing transition struggles of their own (GC 25). These issues go beyond concerns about employment. Full understanding of the nature of transition depends on a willingness and capacity to address these adjustment issues.

High School Curriculum and Transition

High school special education programs traditionally have been surprisingly undifferentiated from elementary level programs. High school methods and curricula have been developed in add-on fashion imitative of accepted, "tried-and-true," elementary special education practices aimed at childhood developmental levels. Many states still certify special educators with blanket K through I2 endorsements. Fortunately, these policies and practices have been counterbalanced of late by the transition movement, and with it, attention to the contrasts and qualitative differences between secondary and elementary programs, and to the impact of secondary programs on students with a wide range of handicapping conditions.

With regard to Northwest High School and to virtually any high school for that matter, a scan of the student guide (Doc 1) clearly reveals the increased emphasis on informed choice and self-reliance, as contrasted with the more nurturing, "teacher-will-take-care-of-it" approach of the elementary school. Like most high schools, Northwest displays program and course descriptions (Doc 1) from which students, with support from counselors, are to make informed choices about their curricula.

It is clear to most observers that the high school indeed represents a different world from that of elementary school. But our knowledge and experience, particularly in curriculum matters regarding high schools for students with handicapping conditions, are tentative and propositional. Though we talk in terms of the relative merits of a "functional" or "academic" curriculum, we face uncertainty as to the effects of and gaps in each insofar as transition is concerned. What role does curriculum play in preparing students for "the outside"? And just what is the best way to bring an already abundant assortment of professional talent and resources in a suburban school district and a given high school to bear on the preparation of any one special education student for independent living?

To the first question, we might answer "everything." Curricula at Northwest's Learning Center and Resource Room are the product of a widely diverse staff in terms of both philosophy and areas of expertise. For any one student, the best blend of staff talents comes together to meet his or her individual needs, though it appears that exactly how this blend takes shape defies any generalized conclusion.

The matters of transition and of living a "normal" life are facilitated by networks of staff and resources both within the LC and Resource Room, and among the LC and other departments (EK 7.5, 7.6; GC 16, 17, 42). Personal differences in philosophies (EK 12), district vs. building conflicts in administrative responsibilities (EK 5.0), and substantive issues (e.g., should curriculum be "functional" or "academic"?) exist; but they are not allowed to get in the way of providing quality, creative programming.

In a very real sense, there exists an underlying continuum of services for Northwest handicapped students in the form of staff curricular expertise (EK 4) and community resource usage (GC I2). Remedial English (DD #26), industrial arts (DD#4), counseling (EK 11.4), district curriculum development, prevocational assessment and training (GC #27), vocational special needs efforts (GC 57; EK 7.5), and other resources are used or not used in combinations appropriate to student needs. LC teachers are afforded the autonomy necessary to orchestrate these curricular combinations. Not surprisingly, both district and Northwest High School staffers experience some anxiety in these relationships (EK 5.0). Yet, as an exemplary program, special education at Shawnee Mission Northwest offers its students an effective continuum of services, thanks in large measure to an interaction of the following factors and circumstances:

1. Excellent working relationships among Learning Center, Resource Room, and regular teaching staff;
2. Special service administrators and staff who are experienced in and knowledgeable about the many facets of special education, and who are aware and involved in current issues and trends;
3. Multiple areas of expertise on the part of the Learning Center and Resource Room teachers, each committed to her philosophies and to the use of her talents for the benefit of handicapped students;
4. A well-organized continuum of prevocational programming options and special vocational needs support services that include work-study counseling, state vocational rehabilitation services, JTPA counselor assistance and program options, Johnson County Mental Retardation Center services, and Johnson County Transit Special Services Transportation;
5. A supportive building administration and faculty comprised of multiply-talented personnel.

It would appear, then, that a well-differentiated special education curriculum is available to Northwest students with handicapping conditions. Further, the various combinations of talented personnel with access to a variety of district and community resources contribute significantly to the quality of life and work for handicapped students.

APPENDIX A

Checklist for Community Job Readiness

Name ______________________________ School ______________________

Teacher ____________________________ Date ________________________

Complete the following form for a student being considered for a community job. Check to indicate student's strengths and limitations. Make recommendations for the job setting. Suggested pre-requisites for job placement: Complete two work samples for a period of not less than eight weeks.

The Student Will:	Strength	Limitation	Recommendation
1. Present an appropriate personal appearance.			
2. Demonstrate personal cleanliness and acceptable hygiene.			
3. Attend school/class regularly.			
4. Complete classroom assignments.			
5. Follow 5 - 8 step directions with no supervision.			
6. Follow a written schedule of at least eight directions.			
7. Make change to $20.00.			
8. Operate cash register.			
9. Demonstrate the ability to retain instructions.			
10. Attend to task at least 90% of the time.			
11. Demonstrate acceptable rate of work.			
12. Demonstrate ability to follow time schedule.			
13. Demonstrate acceptable quality of work.			
14. Be able to work for extended (2-3 hours) period of time.			
15. Understand when and how a job is completed.			

	Strength	Limitation	Recommendation
16. Demonstrate ability to learn new job skills quickly.			
17. Demonstrate effective use of time, equipment, and supplies.			
18. Demonstrate the ability to accept criticism.			
19. Communicate effectively in work setting.			
20. Act/react correctly in social situations.			
21. Accept authority and direction from different supervisors.			
22. Demonstrate knowledge of places to find job leads.			
23. Demonstrate knowledge of reading maps and locating places in community.			
24. Apply for job correctly.			
25. Interview for a job appropriately.			
26. Demonstrate knowledge of realistic job goals.			

Comments:

SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH EDUCATIONAL HANDICAPS IN A RURAL SETTING: A VERMONT CASE STUDY

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Post-Audit Draft

September, 1988

Table of Contents

Page

Introduction and Context 1
School Organization 1
The Context of Special Education Programming at Oxbow High School 2

Oxbow High School Programs 4
Resource Room for Students Identified as Learning Disabled 4
Resource Room for Students Identified as Having Emotional Disturbances 6
Diversified Occupations Class for Students Identified as Learning Impaired 6

Oxbow Vocational Center Programs 8
Diversified Occupations Vocational Transition Program 8
Vocational Special Needs Program 10
Tenth Grade Pre-Vocational Program 11
Vocational Improvement Program 11

Transition Resources in the Community ....
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation 12
Job Training Partnership Act 12
Orange County Mental Health 13
Joyal Vocational Training School 13

Outcomes for First Graduates from Transition III Project 14

Policies and Practices that Work for Oxbow Special Students 17

Policies and Practices that Pose Barriers for Oxbow Special Students 18

Some Concluding Remarks 21

SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH EDUCATIONAL HANDICAPS IN A RURAL SETTING: A VERMONT CASE STUDY

Introduction and Context

Oxbow High School is located in Bradford, Vermont, one of many small towns established along the Vermont-New Hampshire border in the Connecticut River valley. The community of Bradford, like Vermont itself, reflects its history. Once it was an agricultural economy, living on its sheep and lumber, then on its dairy products. Now, it is a mixture of agriculture, light industry, small business, and some tourism and recreation. While each of the small towns in the area has its own unique characteristics, they share the same social and geographical characteristics: pastoral landscapes, picturesque architecture, population traits, healthy economy, and charms and rigors of the climate. The rural character of Bradford is similar to most of the other surrounding communities, and its geographical location makes it relatively easy to serve as the host community for the consolidated high school for its area.

The focus of this case study is special education programming for all students at Oxbow High School who have been identified as having special educational needs. It will attempt to describe as accurately as possible the nature and status of programs and services for students who are on individualized educational plans (IEPs), the policies and procedures that are used in conducting the existing programs, and a perspective on the dilemmas and opportunities that the participants in these programs report relative to their efforts.

School Organization

Oxbow High School, with an enrollment of about 500, serves as the junior high school (7-8) and high school (9-12) for the communities of Bradford, Fairlee, Newbury, Orange, Topsham, and Corinth, Vermont, as well as Piermont, New Hampshire. The high school is a part of the Orange East Supervisory Union, the official educational administrative unit for the state. Physically connected to the Oxbow High School facility is the Oxbow Vocational Center, one of sixteen area vocational-technical schools in the state. While each has its own administrative structure, the Center and the high school share some staff, share responsibility for some of the same students, and must deal with common problems in building and grounds management and maintenance. This has led to the delegation of joint administrative responsibilities in special education programming between and among the Principal of Oxbow High School, the Director of Oxbow Vocational Center, and the Director of Special Education for the Orange East Supervisory Union.

Oxbow Vocational Center is, in essence, a consolidated regional vocational program. It serves three school districts in Vermont (Thetford Academy in Thetford, Oxbow High School in Bradford, and Blue Mountain Union High School in Wells River) and two districts in New Hampshire (Woodsville and Orford). Each of these feeder school districts serves four to five communities. The scope of responsibility in providing special educational services through the Vocational Center is obvious as special needs staff and administrators attempt to deal with up to five home school principals, seven to ten guidance counselors, and families from 20 to 25 rural communities.

The Vermont and New Hampshire Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, as well as their state Job Service agencies, are divided into geographical areas also. This results in the assignment of four different vocational rehabilitation counselors and three different Job Service district offices to work with students and staff at Oxbow High School and Oxbow Vocational Center (GC, SV1-1-1G). Other state agencies, such as state mental health/mental retardation programs, also find the consolidated educational systems overlapping their catchment areas. The degree of organizational complexity is apparent on the surface, but is heightened at the point of attempts to coordinate efforts, collaborate in services, and form formal interagency agreements and informal networks.

The Context of Special Education Programming at Oxbow High School

A description of special education programming at Oxbow High School must be done in context. Part of this context comes from the state's position on special education and transition, as well as the general climate for educational programming. For example, the Vermont State Department of Education has taken a proactive stance in secondary special education programming. Its predominant attention focuses on the outcomes of school programs and the implications of follow-up data for school programs (Doc 35). It has also implemented Project Homecoming (Doc 55), an initiative to emphasize more of a local approach to education than do the regional centers for students identified as learning impaired (mentally retarded). Finally, the Department of Education, through its interagency planning and funding, has encouraged and supported the concept of transition services in local schools.

Another factor in Vermont that adds to the context of special education programming at Oxbow High School is the highly committed nucleus of faculty and project personnel at the University of Vermont. The impact of these advocates of secondary programs for special needs students and their transition to adult living on Vermont schools and community agency transition programming is apparent. Their advocacy provides an ideal climate for schools and human service agencies to expand and improve their efforts.

Vermont has taken a clear position on general educational reform by adopting a set of basic competencies for its schools to use in designing educational curricula and courses of study. It also has dealt with the issue of equity for students with educational handicaps by permitting local school districts to make curricular decisions regarding the competencies and how they are evaluated, as well as decisions on individual students regarding waivers for meeting the minimum competency requirements (Docs 11, 13, & 14).

Local contextual factors in programming for special needs students at Oxbow High School have had both positive and negative effects. On the positive side, during the period from 1980 to 1985, the former Director of Special Education led the secondary special education staff through some important self-evaluations that laid the groundwork for the current Orange East Supervisory Union philosophy (Docs 26, 27, 31, 33-37, and 39). This philosophy stresses that programming should be functional and oriented to life skill development. During the past two years, two key staff members were added to critical vocational programming roles, bringing the program into a significantly new phase of development, at least for part of the program.

Finally, community-based vocational training and vocational education efforts are welcomed in the area communities, because the area economy is excellent and the need for reliable, competent workers is high (GC, SVI-2a-2c).

The most noticeable negative feature of the local education context is the high degree of personnel turnover. Principals at Oxbow High School over the past ten years could be referred to by numbers rather than by name. Teacher and paraprofessional turnover in the junior and senior high school programs for students with learning impairments, learning disabilities, and emotional disturbance respectively has been high. During the one year period of this study, there has been a change in the offices of Superintendent, Director of Special Education, Resource Room Teacher for Learning Disabilities, Resource Room Teacher for Emotional Disturbance, and Project Manager for the Transition III Project. Several key staff are either in their first or second year. Notable exceptions to the personnel turnover or experience factors are the Diversified Occupations Teacher, Associate Teacher, and most of the staff at the Oxbow Vocational Center.

Oxbow High School Programs

This section provides descriptive summaries of special education programs and services at Oxbow High School. There are two categorical resource room programs: one for students with learning disabilities, the other for students with emotional disturbances. There is also a categorical self-contained program for students with learning impairments (mental retardation) that is called the Diversified Occupations (D.O.) program. It is administratively supervised primarily by the principal of Oxbow High School now, but has been a joint administrative responsibility in the past by the high school principal and the Director of the Oxbow Vocational Center.

Resource Room for Students Identified as Learning Disabled

The change in personnel (both the teacher and paraprofessional in 1985-86 and the teacher in 1986-87) in the Resource Room has put this program on hold. It appears that the primary goals have been to provide remedial and/or tutorial assistance to students to help them pass their regular classes, to deal with issues related to students' failures in reading and math, to deal with behavior problems and deficits in social and emotional skills, and to address issues of deficits in skills of self-organization, responsibility, etc. (GC, SV2-14-1A). The Resource Room staff services students in grades 7-12, half of whom are at the 10-12 grade level. Between 45 and 50 students (MC: GC, p. 8) are on individualized educational plans (IEPs) and monitored by Resource Room staff, but all are not necessarily served in the Resource Room (GC, SV2-14-1C).

While the instructional format of a conventional resource room for students with learning disabilities is appropriate for accomplishing the goals cited above, there has been a discrepancy between the expectations of the teacher and program administrators in role description (GC,SV3-1-3C). According to the teacher, the job description calls for more direct instruction time and less for program coordination and supervision (GC, SV2-14-1D). This has not been possible because the responsibility of coordination and record-keeping requires so much time that the paraprofessional has had to assume any direct teaching load (MC: GC, p. 8).

Only about 25 percent of the high school students identified as learning disabled opt for a vocational program in Oxbow Vocational Center (GC, SV2-3-3A). All of the students using the Resource Room are currently on the Basic Competency Plan for high school graduation, but any student who cannot meet any specific competency by the 10th Grade may now petition for a waiver and substitute a competency. This policy will be phased out at the end of the 1986-87 school year, however, and petitions will have to be made by the end of the 8th Grade (GC, SV2-8-1B).

It appears that the Resource Room program has been very successful in positively masking the labeling of students identified as learning disabled for many school staff in Oxbow High School. A guidance counselor stated: "There is a difference between special education students and IEP students [Note: "Special education" and "IEP" students were this counselor's terms for students in Diversified Occupations and the Resource Room respectively]. IEP students see themselves as regular students and they are considered so by the school. Some teachers don't even know they are on IEPs..." (GC, SV2-8-1C). On the other hand, both this same guidance counselor and the principal acknowledged that the current resource room approach and follow-up data on student outcomes probably are in conflict in terms of Oxbow's mainstreaming and resource room curriculum and remedial emphases (GC, SV2-1-2D; SV2- 8-1F). Thus, Resource Room personnel face not only a conflict in job description expectations, but also in the nature of the curriculum and instructional role.

Resource Room for Students Identified As Having Emotional Disturbances

Both its small and fluctuating enrollment and the turnover in teaching personnel have made it difficult for the Resource Room for students with emotional disturbances to have a unique identity, or become established with a clear philosophy and instructional approach. There were only six students at Oxbow High School identified as having emotional or behavior problems significant enough to warrant special education services during the past school year. There were only two the preceding year.

The Resource Room has functioned only two periods per day with special instructional programming. The teacher uses the rest of the time for crisis intervention and consulting with other teachers and staff (GC, SV2-1-2B,2C). The plan for the1987-88 school year is to use a consulting teacher model exclusively and eliminate the resource room approach (MC:GC, p. 9).

Diversified Occupations Class for Students Identified as Learning Impaired

The Diversified Occupations (D.O.) program at Oxbow High School has been under the joint administration of the Principal, Director of the Oxbow Vocational Center, and the Director of Special Education. Historically, it was the program established by the state for the regional centers to serve students with learning impairments. It has been more closely identified with the Vocational Center than the high school because of its title, its initial development and location in the Vocational Center, and the nature of its program (GC, SV1-2a-1A). The enrollment in the D. O. program ranges from about nine to fifteen students. Currently, there are twelve students, all of whom are males, with ages ranging from 15 to 21.

The stated goal of the D. O. class is life preparation and job skills for useful, individual adjustment (GC, SV1-4-1A). The program is comprised of three components-- the in-school program (Grades 9-12), the enclave training program (Grades 9-10), and the community-based occupational program (Grades 11-12). The in-school program has a written set of competencies and a curriculum guide (Doc 40); the enclave training program is a part-time group training placement in the community to develop prevocational and social skills; and the community-based occupational component is a highly structured vocational transition program. (The latter program component is described later under the Vocational Center programs as the Transition III Project).

The in-school program is primarily a self-contained classroom program, conducted by one teacher and a paraprofessional. The daily schedule reflects a curriculum that includes the following content: Activity Period (computer work, driver's education, travel time to community job station, etc.); Shop (woodworking, small engine repair, metal working, home repairs, or house renovation); Health/First Aid (American Red Cross First Aid course, personal hygiene, drug, alcohol, and tobacco use, nutrition, and sex education); Life Skills Math; and English/Reading Skills (functional communication, interviews, applications, etc.) (GC, SV1-4-1D).

Students in the D. O. class in-school program have the opportunity to engage in on-campus work experience in one of two ways. The D. O. students operate the school store during the noon hour on school days under the supervision of the paraprofessional. Other on-campus work experiences include the Oxbow High School cafeteria, the Oxbow Inn (special dining room at the Vocational Center), the Vocational Center office, and buildings and grounds maintenance (GC, SV1-4-1C).

Summer programming is available to students in the D. O. program. Camps or job training were used with 13 of 14 students in the summer of 1985. Examples of placements include Neighborhood Youth Corps, Summer Youth Employment, Green Mountain Conservation Camp, and the Living and Learning Summer Program (GC, SV1-4-2C).

Students labeled as learning impaired in Vermont may present an intellectual performance range from moderate to mild levels of mental retardation. The I.Q. range for the 1985-86 group, for example, was 27-60 (GC, SV1-4-1B). Ten of those were in the mild (educable) level and two at the moderate (trainable) level. The students with mild levels of learning impairment usually qualify for regular high school diplomas, using waivers for specific competencies. Waivers are written by the IEP staffing team (EK, SV1-12-1A). The students with moderate levels of learning impairment in the State of Vermont may earn only a Certificate of Attendance (GC, SV1-4-2A), but no Oxbow students as yet have received this type of exit document (EK, SV1-1-4C).

Oxbow Vocational Center Programs

The Oxbow Vocational Center offers several program components that are special needs support programs or adapted vocational education offerings. Each will be described briefly in this section.

Diversified Occupations Vocational Transition Program

The community-based vocational transition program for D. O. students from Oxbow High School is the most recent and the most structured of all the programs offered to special students at either Oxbow High School or Oxbow Vocational Center. This program is based on an interagency agreement developed in October, 1985, among key state and county agencies--Vocational Rehabilitation, Mental Health Services of Southeastern Vermont, and Orange County Mental Health Services--and the Vermont Department of Education and Orange East Supervisory Union. The interagency agreement and its funding mechanisms provide for a contractual agreement with Transition III Project to provide transition services to students enrolled in the Oxbow Diversified Occupations program (Doc 6, p. 3, 5). The Transition III Project contract included a written Statement of Understanding and a written Statement of Assurances. These documents specified the conditions under which the school, students, and Transition III Project will operate (Doc 6, pp. 11-12).

The Transition III Project is one of seven state transition project models. Training and employment services for Vermont citizens with developmental disabilities have been in place using the Transition Projects model since 1981. This model in Vermont emerged in response to specific vocational training needs that neither the local mental health/mental retardation agencies nor the local vocational rehabilitation offices could serve alone. The goal of the Transition III Project with the students in the Orange East Supervisory Union Diversified Occupations program was to develop, implement, and evaluate a program that would serve moderately to severely mentally disabled youth (Doc 6, p. 3). The fact that the enrollment in this program has been and is now made up of students with mild to moderate levels of mental retardation is not a limiting factor, and the goal of serving more severely mentally handicapped youth when they are referred is still appropriate.

The transition model approach includes the following components: (a) referral services, (b) evaluation and job development, (c) on-the-job training, (d) follow-up, maintenance, and retraining, and (e) advocacy (Doc 6, p. 3). The Transition III Project has developed, and is currently using, a highly structured case management system that involves the use of organized procedures for acquiring and storing case information, conducting job development, job placement, job training, job maintenance monitoring, and follow-up. This includes a client file system that specifies all the forms and types of information that are required in case management (Doc 7, pp. 10-18).

The key staff member in this program is the Transition Project Coordinator. The Coordinator's role is to perform the following functions: (GC, SV1-4-3-B)

1. Assessment of students
2. Parent communication relative to insurance, benefits, transportation, etc.
3. Job finding and job development
4. Job analysis and learning of job
5. Placement and training of students (average training time about six to eight weeks)
6. Arrangement and coordination of support services, including transportation
7. Follow-up of students (indefinite)

The Coordinator shares an office with the Oxbow Vocational Center Cooperative Education Coordinator, who has been designated as the Center's acting liaison with the Transition Project. He keeps the Center and the Co-op Coordinator informed of plans and actions taken with regard to each student in the program.

There is a strong underlying philosophical position in the national transition movement that is reflected in both the Vermont regional projects and the OxbowTransition III Project approach. There is also a commitment to community-based, competitive employment for at least minimum wage earnings, and to the acquisition of personal-social and daily living skills needed for full citizenship in the community.

Vocational Special Needs Program

The Oxbow Vocational Center has responded to the needs of students from its five feeder schools who have vocational training interests and goals, but who are educationally handicapped in some way. The Vocational Special Needs Project is designed to support any student identified as handicapped and who is on an IEP. The Vocational Special Needs Teacher (VSNT) is responsible for developing and assisting in the implementation of the vocational components of the IEP for each of these students. The VSNT does this by assisting vocational instructors in determining specific vocational objectives for the vocational components of the IEP and by assisting instructors in modifying their curricula and instructional procedures for individual students. Direct support to students is also provided by the VSNT through appropriate assessment, direct instruction, referral to other services, and advocacy (Doc 21, p. 1; GC, SV2-3-1B).

The vocational education programs available to special needs students at Oxbow Vocational Center include: agriculture mechanics, forestry, building trades, automotive services, human services, food services, health occupations, electrical services, office occupations, and graphic arts. Successful completion of any one of these vocational training areas contributes credits toward a high school diploma, the requirements for which are determined by the students' home schools. Each student completing a vocational program receives a certificate of completion and a copy of the competencies mastered within the program (GC, SV2-3-2E). Special needs students not only have demonstrated success in completing some of these regular vocational training programs, but some students have excelled (GC, SV1-8-1C). Employment for these successful completers has been no problem, although they do not always find employment in the specific areas of training (GC, SV1-8-1D).

Transition planning for special needs students on IEPs at the vocational center is done on a selective basis for those students whose IEPs indicate a need for transition services in general, or vocational transition services in particular. This is a decision made by the students and parents, the staffing team, and the VSNT (GC, SV2-3-2F). The VSNT has a strong commitment to parent communication and parent involvement. Parents are contacted directly in decision-making and through both direct and indirect methods for information and communication (GC, SV2-3-1B). Transition planning is supported by a close tie between the current vocational special needs program and the primary agencies serving persons with disabilities.

Tenth Grade Pre-Vocational Program

The goal of the Pre-Vocational Program is to assist at-risk or behavior problem students in achieving success through pre-vocational activities. Identified students are tenth graders who have been unable to cope with the regular academic environment. The program is designed to keep these students in school, provide them with exposure to vocational options, and increase the likelihood of a successful pre-vocational experience through the development of certain personal-social skills as well as academic attitudes and skills (Doc 9, p. 9). To date, 90% of the pre-vocational program enrollees have stayed in school to completion. Six of the 20 students currently enrolled are on IEPs (GC, SV2-4-1A).

The curriculum for the Pre-vocational Program was developed by the Pre-Vocational staff and is based on Michelle Sarkee's publication, Vocational Special Needs. It is comprised of content and activities frequently referred to as "related academics." Feeder schools to the Center approve this course for English, life skills, and vocational exploration credit because of the level and quality of the instruction. Activities in report writing, life skills (primarily consumer skills), practical math, and hands-on vocational activities are woven together to make up the curriculum. It is a self-contained class with daily instruction for two hours per day (GC, SV2-4-1B).

Vocational Improvement Program

The Vocational Improvement Program (VIP) is for any 11th or 12th grade student enrolled in a vocational course who tests or performs two grade levels below his or her current grade level in math or language skills, or who feels that he or she would benefit from added support in his or her vocational program. A student becomes involved with the program through referral by test scores, through home school recommendations, through referral from the vocational instructor, or by self-referral. Students with learning disabilities are among those who take advantage of this program.

The VIP option provides basic math skills and their direct application in each vocational area. The language skills section covers penmanship, writing skills, and research techniques. In addition, students are given help in writing resumes and filling out forms, as well as help in improving verbal skills (Doc 9, p. 14). Home schools for students have often given school credit in math and English for the work completed in this program (GC, SV2, 3-2G).

Transition Resources in the Community

The primary community transition resources for students attending Oxbow High School are the Vermont and New Hampshire district offices of vocational rehabilitation , the area Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) program, Orange County Mental Health, the Vermont and New Hampshire Job Service offices, and Joyal Vocational Training School. The following paragraphs give an overview of the contributions of key resources for Oxbow High School.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

The Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) has made a strong commitment to the Vermont transition model through its program funding support as well as the individual rehabilitative services that it has traditionally provided (GC, SV1-7-2B). For example, it funds 70% of the Transition III Project. The Transition III Project contract with Oxbow, however, is funded primarily by the Orange East Supervisory Union. All students from the D. O. class must be on a vocational rehabilitation counselor's caseload. At the present time, three Vermont counselors and one New Hampshire counselor serve the Oxbow catchment area. Three are responsible for geographic areas, and one is responsible for any Vermont student who is in the Rural Farm Family program focusing on agricultural employment.

One vocational rehabilitation counselor reported that there is not a clear relationship generally between DVR and the public schools in Vermont. Vermont DVR Counselors and local high school staff work together in varying degrees of active cooperation (GC, SV2-6-1B).

Counselors with DVR and school personnel at Oxbow have a much more active and structured set of expectations as a result of the Transition III Project interagency agreement, and Vermont DVR is more involved than ever before in providing services (EK, SV1-1-1C).

Job Training Partnership Act

This federally funded employment training program for employment in the private sector has an operative contract in the Oxbow catchment area as a result of a Transition III Project proposal for funding. All students in the Transition III Project who are placed in community-based, non-public employment training participate in the JTPA program, which pays part of the students' wages for a specified period.

Orange County Mental Health

Adult vocational and residential services for persons with developmental disabilities are provided through this community agency. Services include sheltered employment, vocational transition services, group homes and supervised apartments, day activities, legal aid, assistance with state and federal entitlements, and transportation (GC, SV1-7-3B).

With the exception of a cooperative summer youth employment project and occasional sharing of in-service training activities, there is no cooperative relationship between Orange County Mental Health and Oxbow High School. Some school personnel have the perception that the Oxbow Transition III Project was viewed by the mental health center's leadership as competitive for its own transition funding (GC, SV1-1-1D; EK, SV1-1-1B; GC, SV2-9-2A). Recent organizational problems at Orange County Mental Health led to the development of a new adult service agency, which may provide Oxbow High School with a new opportunity for cooperative efforts.

Joyal Vocational Training School

Joyal Vocational Training School and Irons House, both a part of Irons Rehabilitation Center in Waterbury, Vermont, are training resources for Oxbow special needs students. Joyal vocational training programs include: clerical skills, food service trades, health care assistant, and custodial services. It also offers adult basic education and a prevocational course course entitled, World of Work. The training programs range in length from 15 to 22 weeks. There is a special summer session called Summer Living and Learning Program that exposes students to all vocational areas and focuses on independent living skills training at Irons House. Irons House is also used as the residential facility for students attending the vocational school (Doc 24; GC, SV1-7-3A). Oxbow High School accepts Joyal's program as an alternative program to meet graduation requirements. This was used successfully with one drop-out student who had had a very unsuccessful experience in the Oxbow High School program. He was sent with Vocational Rehabilitation funding to Joyal for custodial occupational training and adult basic education services, and he successfully completed the programs and was placed in employment (GC, SV1-7-3A). [Note: Joyal has subsequently been closed and is no longer a resource to the school (Doc 57).]

Outcomes for First Graduates from Transition III Project

The initial contract between Transition III and Orange East Supervisory Union specified that transition services would be provided to five Oxbow High School Students, two of whom were already placed in community-based employment sites (Doc 7). At the time of writing this case study, one is in employment training. Four of the students have completed their training through the D. O. class and graduated from Oxbow High School. Each of these graduates is receiving periodic follow-up, but is maintaining himself independently or semi-independently in his job and personal life. The "lifestyles of the rich and famous" may be of interest to another segment of the population, but readers of this case study will find the lifestyle sketches of these young men to be very gratifying.

B. S. (GC, SV3-2-1b)

B. S., age 22, was placed by the Transition Project at a custom furniture manufacturing plant in the Bradford area. He has maintained successful employment there to this date, with three up-gradings of job assignments and pay. He is currently earning $5.50 per hour and has employee benefits including a paid annual vacation and insurance coverage under Blue Cross/Blue Shield. He started with a job in repair and maintenance of equipment, was re-assigned to stockroom helper, and is now doing furniture assembly.

B. S. is a member of his village Volunteer Fire Department and the local Grange. He is active in his church and socializes with his friends from the D. O. class at Oxbow High School, some co-workers at the plant, and friends in the Fire Department and the Grange. He spends his recreational and leisure time assisting with a youth group at church, fishing, camping, skiing, and watching video movies.

He tried living in an apartment independently, but found he could not afford both an apartment and participate in ski trips and other recreational interests that he has. Consequently, B. S. is back at home with his parents, paying them and doing chores for his room and board.

B. S. has a driver's license and owns his own truck. He is getting tutoring in the local adult basic education program so that he can advance in the Fire Department from hose operator to driver/pump operator. He has purchased some land and dreams of living there in a house trailer some day.

J. B. (GC, SV3-2-1C)

J. B., age 22, has been employed for over a year at another local furniture manufacturer. He has been given several pay raises and is now earning $5.75 per hour with benefits.

J. B. is living with a young woman who is a senior in the Oxbow Vocational Center Cooperative Education program, and they have a one year old son. He is very well accepted at work and in his social life and has used his good looks, athletic skills, and social skills to his advantage both on and off the job.

J. B. recently bought a car, but he does need help from his former teacher in budgeting and keeping his bank balance. He uses a calculator when shopping and gets assistance in reading from his girl friend or others when needed. He maintains close family ties and his mother is supportive. His girl friend is bright and has a job as an assistant manager at a Sears store. He spends recreational time with his family and working on a pit crew with a car racing team.

J. S. (GC, SV3-2-2A)

J. S., age 22, has been employed for nearly sixteen months as a busboy at a resort hotel restaurant in the area. He has proved himself as a valued, respected worker. The manager has kept him on maintenance jobs during the off-season and slow weekdays for the hotel, while others are laid off. He earns $3.00 per hour plus a "headcount split" on gratuities with waiters and waitresses. He averages $9.00 per hour, and his annual earnings are more than his father's. He has been offered jobs in maintenance but makes more in his busboy job than he could in any other hotel position.

J. S. has a driver's license and owns a car. He socializes primarily with high school friends formerly in the D. O. program. However, he is a member of the local Fire Department and sings in a church choir. He does some recreational activities with co-workers, but he lives some distance from most of them and this makes it difficult for frequent interaction. He is dating a young woman from another high school who is in the Vocational Special Needs Program at Oxbow Vocational Center.

K. O. (GC, SV3-2-2b)

K. O. is 22 years of age and employed at a local sawmill. He began as a lumber stacker where he sorted and stacked cut timber. After this was automated, the plant trained him on equipment maintenance. He maintains the blades and saws after sawmill crews leave in the afternoons. About 90% of his work time is alone and unsupervised.

K. O. lives with his uncle in the woods and enjoys the out-of-doors. He is building his own house on a 3-acre plot that his uncle has deeded over to him. He purchased lumber week by week until he had enough to start building. Although his view that there is no reason to get a building permit alarms his former teachers, it is a serious construction effort and he does intend to live in it when completed.

K. O. has a driver's license and has his own pick-up truck which he uses to drive himself into town for work or leisure activities. He is still somewhat tied to his teachers and friends at school and visits frequently in the mornings when he is not working. His recreational interests include hunting and fishing, but he spends much of his time in good weather in building his house and, in season, tapping maple trees for syrup. His former teacher says, "K__ is very happy with his life right now. He wrote a letter to a friend recently and said he had a piece of land in Chelsea, only he spelled piece, 'peace.'....He is a marvelous human being." (Doc 53)

Policies and Practices that Work for Oxbow Special Students

It is obvious from these sketches that there are a number of policies and practices in place that benefit students with special needs at Oxbow High School. This section summarizes much of what has been referred to in program descriptions above.

1. There is a state and local commitment to the transition needs of youth with learning impairments. These commitments are shown in the state level transition agreements among key agencies and the local contractual arrangements with Transition III Project. The need and rationale for transition services, as well as the policies and program procedures to be used, are in writing to document the commitment of all participants. Each student in the Diversified Occupations class has an individualized transition plan that complements and supplements his or her individualized educational plan.

2. The channels of communication between key personnel in the Oxbow transition program are open and function well. School staff, the Transition III Project staff, vocational rehabilitation counselors, and employers are currently communicating regularly and effectively through both planned meetings and informal networking.

3. Parent communication efforts are a priority for the staff in the critical student-family contact roles. The D. O. teacher, the Special Needs Vocational Teacher, and the Transition Coordinator use direct contacts with parents as their primary means of communication (DD, SV2-16-2B). Parents respond well to this and praise these individuals and the school in general for keeping them informed and involved in both planning and programming for their children (GC, SV1-16-1A,1B).

4. The transition project for the D. O. program students and the vocational special needs program at Oxbow Vocational Center are exemplary components. They give the overall special

education program a focus on vocational and adult independent living skills that is not evident in other phases of the program. More importantly, the exemplariness reflects quality in the way they operate. The people who are responsible for these programs are, in large measure, the basis for that quality.

5. The employment outlook in Bradford and its neighboring communities is excellent and provides opportunities for a variety of community-based vocational training experiences. Exemplary transition programs, however, depend not only upon the availability of employment training sites, but also accessibility to them. The Transition Coordinator reports a success rate of one placement in four employer contacts, in contrast to the more typical one in ten (EK, SV1-11-3A).

6. The current involvement of the Vermont and New Hampshire Divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation is nearly ideal, with three vocational rehabilitation counselors indicating active interest and collaboration. The state level commitment of Vermont DVR for 70% funding of the transition program is outstanding and may prove to be a model policy for elsewhere in the state and, eventually, across the nation. The commitment of the state Department of Mental Health for 30% funding is significant also, and the interagency collaboration with DVR is making this program possible.

Policies and Practices That Pose Barriers to Oxbow Special Students

Every educational or human service program has its growing edges, its problems, or its barriers for moving to the next level of quality. Oxbow High School's programming for its special students is no exception. Many of the persons interviewed for this case study mentioned problem areas, challenges for improvement, and dreams of better services for youth with educational handicaps at Oxbow High School. Some of these relate to existing policies or practices that are seen as barriers to quality programming, while others suggest the need for new policies or practices that would address problem areas or needed program changes. Some of these barriers include the following:

1. There is an obvious discrepancy in quality between the programs in place for students with learning impairments in the Diversified Occupations class and the Vocational Special Needs

Program at Oxbow Vocational Center, and in the programs in place for identified handicapped students who choose not to participate in vocational programs. The criteria for comparisons in quality are not based on a philosphical position of vocational vs. non-vocational or a self-contained, functional curriculum vs. a mainstreamed, academic curriculum. Rather, the judgment of quality is more related to a lack of direction for the resource rooms and the instructional needs of the students placed in them. There is ambiguity for the staff as to what they should be doing, how to do it, and any sense of who would support them if they were to initiate any changes. While confusion over administrative responsibility and control between the building leadership and the leadership of the supervisory union could be (and was) cited as a significant barrier, it is important to acknowledge that this is not a uniquely local problem. The issues of the nature of appropriate programming and effective instructional approaches are national issues. Nevertheless, there still can be a local response to the situation with proactive planning and development to make the resource room programs as values driven and goal-directed in their policies and practices as is the D.O. Transition Project. The JTPA proposal last year to expand the transition program to students labeled as learning disabled or behavior disordered was a positive step in this direction, but it apparently was initiated by the current transition program team as a part of its contract renewal proposal rather than through a joint plan with the Resource Room staff. The lack of specific planning and transition efforts for resource room students once they leave school for postsecondary training options or employment assistance add to the gap in services for this group.

2. There is a general concern in the high school about the turnover in administrative and instructional personnel. The political climate and administrative limitations of the Orange East Supervisory Union (Docs 2, 4) may be the basis for this personnel problem, or it may be only a symptom of more complex geographical and socio-cultural problems. The mixture of socioeconomic levels, educational levels, and the conservatism and provincialism of the region may be a combination of factors that make the community unsure of its identity and direction in its public education. Teachers or administrators who are not Vermonters, or who cannot adapt to the expectations of the community, do not survive well (GC, SV3, Int. note, p. 3). Jan Morris, a Vermont observer, has said, "Vermonters, it seems to me, are like ethnics in their own land. They are exceedingly conscious of their difference from other Americans, and they talk a great deal about outsiders, newcomers, and people from the south."

Although there has been an effort since 1980 to do program review and curriculum planning for special education at Oxbow High School, much of the potential for that effort deteriorated with personnel changes. Coordinated planning can be undermined when administrative and instructional personnel are difficult to find and keep (EK, SV1-3-2A).

3. There is a great need for better articulation of program goals from elementary through high school program levels. There are some staff who believe that transition planning and programming should begin at a younger age level than is generally the case in the supervisory union (DD, SV2-16-2A). Teachers, administrators, and parents of students across all age levels have not addressed the basic issues of scope and sequence in the curriculum. Again, this is difficult when the vital participants are not around long enough to provide perspective and continuity.

4. There is some uncertainty about who is really in charge of program policies and procedures in matters of substance, such as program philosophy, scope and sequence of curricula, etc. The Oxbow principal, the Director of the Oxbow Vocational Center, and the former Director of Special Education, acknowledge the rationale behind the superintendent's approach to delegation of authority, but find the implementation of it difficult at times (Doc 5; GC, SV1-2a-2A; DD, SV2-10-1A & 1E; DD, SV2-13-1H; GC, SV2-15-1D). One of the program administrators shared his frustration by saying: "I have come to the conclusion that the dual administration and supervision arrangement does not work" (GC, SV2-15-1C). Clearly, the problem is exacerbated by the fact that administrative responsibility for specialized programs at the Vocational Center converge with mutual vested interests for students from Oxbow High School. Although this is not unique to Orange East Supervisory Union (district sharing of services can be problematic everywhere), dual administration practices can be a barrier to coordinated programs.

5. Current general transition support services in this rural area of Vermont are limited (GC, SV1-11-4D). Transportation services, leisure and recreation services, legal aid, and residential options are spotty at best, and pose real barriers for full adult citizenship for those whose incomes or skills do not permit them to live away from home, own a car or vehicle, or use community resources (EK, SV1-11-2C).

Much of the potential vacuum in employment-related transition services has been filled with competent teachers and vocational personnel at Oxbow High School and Oxbow Vocational Center, and with the efforts of individuals associated with statewide initiatives such as the Transition III Project. Yet, some view transition in a broader perspective. The quality of one's home, social, and leisure life may not necessarily fall into place with a good job alone. Moreover, barriers in these aspects of life, such as no options for transportation or inadequate independent living housing, may adversely affect one's job. These broader issues faced by a person with a disability are equally important to the person and his or her family, and may require equal attention in transition training and programming.

Vermont is not alone as it approaches these general issues related to transition. With its statewide and local talent, it should be able to grapple squarely with them. But Vermont is inescapably rural, and given that context, there simply is not, nor will there be, the range of community services that perhaps would be available to city and suburban populations. The model developed by schools in consolidation and cooperative efforts, however, demonstrates that much can be done, and community service providers have the opportunity now to do the same kinds of things.

Some Concluding Remarks

The very nature of rural Vermont indeed reduces the array of service options that could be available to handicapped students in other places. But its size and New England culture also make Vermont, and in particular, Oxbow High School, a place where the "smallness" helps facilitate communication among staffers, parents, and others (EK, SV1-6-1F).

The area, like so many rural areas in this country, conforms to its own traditions of local norms. For students with handicaps, the fact that fewer options for services exist is counterbalanced well by fairly definitive roles provided in the rural community. In contrast, the city would offer more options, but in the city, one's role and identity may be fuzzy at best, and nonexistent at worst. In rural Vermont, roles seem to be clearer and identities easier to come by.

Despite concerns relating to varying levels of program quality, personnel retention and recruitment, dual administrative authority issues, and quality of life facets of transition, one cannot help but get a sense of energy and commitment on the part of a nucleus of professionals involved in this high school program for students with educational handicaps. Perhaps the concerns, as well as the indicators of exemplariness pointed out in this case study, will assist the key educators serving students with disabilities at Oxbow High School in hammering out strategies that address the concerns as they see them, and capitalizing on existing talents and commitment in doing so.

A CASE STUDY OF SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH MILD AND MODERATE DISABILITIES IN PHILADELPHIA

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Post-Audit Draft

September, 1988

Table of Contents

Page
Introduction 1

Special Education Services 2
    The Executive Director and Program Development Director 3
    Special Education in the Manning-Brown Sub-District. 4

Some Issues of Concern in Philadelphia. 8
    Coordination of Services 9
    IEP and Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities 12
    The Role of Parents 15
    Quality of Life for Youth with Disabilities 17
    Community Relations 19

Conclusions 20

Appendix 23

Introduction

Philadelphia is a Middle-Atlantic port city of two million that has played a major national role in history, politics, commerce, industry, and finance since the early colonial period. The city is a transportation hub, with excellent air, rail, sea, and highway systems. It is located about halfway between New York and Washington, D.C., and is central to the densely populated five-city northeastern corridor from Boston to Washington. Along with all of the advantages of major cultural and resource center, Philadelphia also has to cope with large numbers of urban poor, and the school system includes many students who are economically disadvantaged and from cultural and ethnic minorities. In short, the city is large and diverse with a unique mixture of opportunities and problems. Like Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, and others, Philadelphia is a city of contrasts that envelopes extremes of wealth, political views, and educational attainment. Within its vastness are some excellent opportunities for students with disabilities, but the very vastness of the city means that these opportunities may be hard for some to capture.

The School District of Philadelphia is divided into seven sub-districts (Doc 32.3), each with considerable administrative autonomy and each with its own distict superintendent. The sub-districts represent different sections of Philadelphia from inner city to suburban, and are quite different from one another in demographics and geography (Doc 32.3). Philadelphia is a city of "neighborhoods" such as Manyunk, Germantown, University City, the Great Northeast, Society Hill, Center City, South Philly, and the rest. The neighborhood can exert considerable influence on the quality of the sub-district schools in its catchment area. However, all sub-districts offer the city-wide curriculum and provide equivalent educational opportunities since they are sub-districts and not independent school systems. The schools examined in this case study, Manning High School and the Brown Vocational Skills Center*, are located in a large, middle-class sub-district in the northeastern part of the city.

Philadelphia is a large and complex school district organized according to a variety of hierarchies and administrative units across and within the sub-districts. Special education programs must conform to extensive district policies. They also must comply with state and federal laws and regulations that require a series of formal interactions with various professionals and parents, involving considerable record keeping of these interactions to place and educate a student. Taken together, these characteristics mean that evaluation and individualized educational planning for a student could include a formidable array of helping professionals and family members.

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* At the request of the schools under study, their actual names have been replaced with pseudonyms.

This case study addresses special and vocational education services for high school special education students attending Manning and Brown during the 1986-87 school year. The aim of the study is to describe the range of special services offered in this urban setting, to illuminate exemplary services, and to raise some issues that appear deserving of attention. The following discussion examines the structure, functions, and implementation of special education, especially as they affect secondary programming and transition services.

Special Education Services

The delivery of special education services is under the jurisdiction of the Executive Director of the Division of Special Education, who is supervised by the Deputy Superintendent for School Operations. The Executive Director of Special Education has three offices that report to him directly: Clinical Services, Technical Support Services, and Program Development Services (Doc 13). However, this case study will be limited mainly to operations under the Office of Program Development, which has in its purview most of the programs and personnel that affect special education programs for students with disabilities. For example, Program Development oversees staff development, adapted curriculum, federal programs, program quality control, vocational education, and educational technology, among others (Doc 13). In addition to supervising those services, the Office of Program Development works with the sub-district offices of special education.

The sub-district offices of special education are not directly under the supervision of the Executive Director of Special Education; instead those services are supervised by the sub-district Superintendents. However, the Executive Director of Special Education has the ultimate authority and responsibility for special education services. He has delegated authority to the three office directors. Each of the directors is responsible for the services assigned to him or her, and has the authority to make decisions and execute district policy directives with accountability to the Executive Director. (An organizational chart of the Division of Special Education is appended to the case study.)

The Executive Director and the Program Development Director

The Executive Director of Special Education, the Director of Program Development, and their staffs are located in the Stevens Aministrative Building, a former junior high school just north of Center City Philadelphia. In these offices a core staff works on a variety of projects ranging from district-wide policy recommendations to direct services for students and teachers. For the past three years the top priority of the central staff has been the implementation of local transition policies. Transition refers to the orderly movement of a student with a disability from school-based special education programs to the adult arenas of training, work, and social adjustment in the community.

The Executive Director of Special Education has delegated a great deal of programmatic responsibility to the Director of Program Development, and has charged her with developing a comprehensive plan for transition and vocational education (DD 30 1d). It is only in the last three years that the school system has made a formal commitment to address the transition of special education students from school to adult life. The state's legal age limit on compulsory schooling, 21 years, has meant that schools would lose students at about the age of employment, so there is "a tremendous need for support agencies to come together" and coordinate the move to employment (DD 30 1b). This need for coordination is the main reason the Executive Director assigned transition responsibility to the Director of Program Development. It is her task to improve coordination among agencies.

The Executive Director's charge to the Program Development Director is broad. The issues include: What is transition? What are our transition goals? What are the extent and limits of public school responsibility? (DD 30 1d). Though the schools generally have always tried to prepare students for adult life, the transition movement is more immediate with respect to public concern and more specific in terms of the demands on public schools. The Director of Program Development is expected to build and maintain a formal system of transition, complete with policy manuals, training materials, and implementation procedures (DD 30 1d). The

Executive Director's style of management seems to be: select a competent deputy; delineate the task; stand back and let the deputy get on with the work the best way she knows how.

This system seems to suit both the Executive Director and the Director of Program Development, who can be characterized as an active, goal-oriented manager. The Director of Program Development describes her system as management by objective, with clear criteria for the staff, timelines, specified activities, regular staff evaluation and so forth (DD 19 1e). Her personal style is formal and direct; she has clear ideas of what she wants to accomplish, and these are clearly transmitted to the staff. Her expectations of the staff are high, and though the office atmosphere is businesslike, it also includes personal interactions and a generally positive tone. It appears that the staff know, understand, and accept what is expected of them in developing and implementing the transition policy.

During the 1986-87 school year, Philadelphia implemented the Individualized Transition Plan (ITP). The ITP has been developed with the contributions of principals, vocational counselors, and other school professionals. The point of the ITP is to expand on and extend the concerns and goals raised in the IEP. Originally the IEP was expected to be the vehicle of transition; yet, as one administrator put it, "the IEP process alone has not met the challenge of ensuring interagency cooperation" toward transition (DD 19 1d). Indeed, the ITP is designed to remedy a lack of coordination that often exists between the home-school and the vocational center, between vocational education and special education, and between the district and outside agencies. The ITP will assign specific people to function as liaisons among these agencies, and to address specific problems (DD 19 1c; EK 32 1a).

Special Education in the Manning-Brown Sub-District

Seven years ago the school system decentralized special education services, giving the responsibility for supervising direct special education services staff to the sub-district's superintendent. In each sub-district a special education administrator manages a team that provides direct services to the schools. The sub-district office of special education in the Manning-Brown area serves all the schools in that sub-district and supervises a total of 10 psychologists, three supervisors, seven instructional advisors, and several sub-contracted psychiatrists, physical and occupational therapists, and parent involvement specialists (DD 11

1c; EK 10 1g). Instructional advisors assist in program and curricular matters, participate in the IEP process, and provide consultative services to special education teachers (EK 31 3b). Parent involvement specialists assist parents in their participation in program planning and access to resources for their sons and daughters (EK 10 1g).

Special Education at Manning High School

Special education services at Manning High School can originate from the school, the sub-district office, or the district's Office of Special Education. Manning does not have a formal department of special education as such, but staff members function much as a department would. These include the vice-principal, support staff, itinerant resource room teachers, and self-contained classroom teachers. This group is supported by staff from the sub-district special education office, which offers support in health or psychological services, curriculum, instruction, speech, audiology, and vocational education, among others. The Manning staff also can obtain support from the Stevens Administrative Center in areas such as transition planning, parent training, or placement in vocational skills centers such as Brown.

Twenty-seven hundred students, grades nine through 12 attended Manning High School in the 1986-87 school year (EK 31 1a). About 200 of these were served in special education programs (EK 31 3a). A total of sixteen special education teachers staffed special education programs including those for gifted students (EK 31 2a). For students with disabilities, there are two resource room programs for students with learning and behavior problems, two self-contained programs for students with mild mental handicaps, one self-contained program for students with moderate mental handicaps, and two self-contained programs for students with severe/profound impairments (EK 31 2b). Six special education teachers who also teach regular education classes share the resource room programs, teaching one or two periods each day (EK 31 2b).

One of the self-contained classroom teachers of students with mild mental handicaps serves as the in-building special education chairperson (EK 31 1b). Her duties include attendance counts, program development, supply maintenance, the IEP process, and provision of substitute teachers (EK 31 2a). She is accountable to the Vice Principal who in turn interacts with the sub-district's special education supervisor concerning procedural and programmatic matters (DD 4 1j).

Students have access to a variety of general curriculum programs that can assist them in preparation for adult life and work. Among them are the business education program in which some are mainstreamed. This program taught by a regular business educator covers skills related to typing, clerical, and office work (EK 31 2c). Other programs that mainstream students with disabilities include home economics (EK 31 2c) and industrial arts.

The industrial arts program includes wood shop, metal shop, drafting, printing, and electrical work (EK 5 1c). One of the industrial arts teachers indicated that, for both handicapped and non-handicapped students, the main objective of the program is exposure to various skills and trades, and evaluation for the purpose of determining whether a student can benefit from vocational programs such as those offered at the Brown Skills Center (EK 5 1e).

There is also the work program which involves volunteer work experience (EK 31 3f). Self-contained teachers also serve in a follow-up capacity in a variety of placement sites. The teacher responsible for one of these programs had 14 students placed at a nearby hospital working in departments such as medical records, radiology, information, dietary, and laundry (EK 31 3f). Though students are not guaranteed a job upon graduation, nearly all who participate in the work program are subsequently employed (EK 31 3f).

The Brown Vocational Skills Center

Perhaps the most viable option open to handicapped students is placement at the Brown Vocational Skills Center during the 10th, 11th, and/or 12th grade. Brown is one of two vocational skills centers in the city. Its source of supervision is the district's Division of Career and Vocational Education which is, hierarchically, at the same organizational level as is the Division of Special Education.

Brown's catchment area includes all public and parochial high schools in Manning's sub-district (Doc 4). If a student wants to pursue a full course of vocational training, or wants to attend a course not offered at Manning, the student is referred to the Brown Skills Center. The

Executive Director of Career and Vocational Education has delegated an administrator to function as a liaison with special education (DD 2 1a). This same person also serves on the Vocational Review Committee, which is composed of the Manning-Brown sub-district Supervisor of Special Education, a Brown administrator (who is usually the Vice Principal responsible for special education), vocational personnel, and one or more special education teachers from Brown (EK MC 1k). The Vocational Review Committee, using recommendations from the Manning staff and available assessment information selects candidates for Brown's programs (DD: 12 1c). During 1986-87, 308 of Brown's students were identified as disabled, with the vast majority being identified as mentally handicapped (116) and learning disabled (168) (DD 15 2f).

Brown offers training to students with mild and moderate disabilities as well as non-disabled students. It offers a large selection of vocational curricula and experiences, such as automotive, air conditioning, carpentry, drafting, childcare, appliance repair, baking, electrical work, and accounting (Doc 6). In addition to vocational education teachers, Brown employs shop assistants who are expert in various industrial trades, though not necessarily college educated (DD 15 1c). The administrators at Brown maintain formal, ongoing relationships with the Philadelphia business community, and thus do well in attempts to bring staff on board with a variety of skills and expertise (DD 15 1c).

Job coordinators assist students in obtaining and maintaining jobs, usually during their senior year (EK 6 1c). The job coordinators develop possible work sites for students consistent with the vocational training students are receiving at Brown (EK 6 1e). Along with special education teachers at Manning, they also assist in job coaching and follow-up for students at the work sites (EK 6 1b; 31 3f), though this is not their primary role (DD 30 1b). Job coordinators will initiate contacts with agencies external to the district for students with disabilities who they observe having difficulty with vocational training (EK 6 1g). Pennsylvania's Departments of Vocational Rehabilitation and Mental Retardation have regional offices (OVR and OMR, respectively) in Philadelphia. Job Coordinators will interact with these agencies in an attempt to make them aware of students who will need services at age 21 and beyond (EK 6 1g).

One of the more interesting features of special education efforts in the Manning-Brown sub-district is the alternate week placement concept. Brown students from Manning maintain enrollment at their "home-school". Students attend Brown for one week of intense vocational training, then return to their home-school for one week of regular academic training. At Manning, students receive double periods of academic work in order to meet Philadelphia's graduation requirement of 21.5 credits (DD 25 1a), a half-credit (for English) higher than the statewide requirement (DD 13 1b). The alternate week schedule continues throughout the academic year.

Some Issues of Concern in Philadelphia

Several issues emerged from this case study that warrant attention. They include the coordination of services, the program planning process for students, the role of parents, students' quality of life, and community relations.

Coordination of Services

Perhaps the most frequent concern heard during interviews was the lack of coordination between any two administrative units who were trying to serve the same student (DD 12 1f). This was especially true of teachers and parents, who were less likely to be aware of transition opportunities, whereas administrators and job coordinators were more aware of services, but frustrated at times in their attempts to obtain them (MC RCS 2.8).

Attitudes and beliefs of those interviewed were expressed freely, even though some of those beliefs were based on misinformation. For instance, one person complained about the lack of freedom to leave school to search for jobs for students. In fact, teachers involved in job development activities are school district employees who are free to leave the building when looking for job contacts (EK 16 1a) as long as they maintain accountability relative to such activities. This illustrates one recurring problem, namely that knowledge of transition services and techniques are not widespread among teachers, building staff, or parents. While persons charged with transition responsibilities are quite knowledgable about services, regulations, and procedures, that knowledge has not been disseminated to all of the participants in the IEP or ITP process.

Coordination Within the School District

One common concern involved the relationship between Divisions of Career and Vocational Education (CVE) and Special Education. Relations are cordial enough, but productive cooperation takes special effort. If the teacher, counselor, psychologist, or some other member of the IEP or ITP team does not make contact with CVE, chances are that the student will not receive those services. Staff from the two programs are aware of this problem and have tried to address it in several ways. For example, The Executive Director of CVE has delegated an administrator to function as a liaison with special education. This same person also serves as the CVE liaison to the Vocational Review Committee. At this level cooperation is strong between special education and vocational education. It is at the level of formal program planning that cooperation breaks down, perhaps because staff are not fully aware of what services vocational education can offer, or of how to secure those services for their students. The ITP process has been designed to address this issue (DD 19 1c).

The nature of the IEP process can contribute to coordination problems among vocational and special education staff members. Goals and objectives are selected at the IEP session that may scatter responsibility for vocational training across special and vocational education. The Director of Program Development feels that this problem can be resolved if it is clearly understood that special education is concerned with transition questions, and that it should not devote an inordinate proportion of its resources to vocational training. Viewed in this way, vocational education becomes a contributor to rather than an equivalent of a successful transition. The ITP is a mechanism for keeping these priorities in order, and for assuring that school resources are directed toward transition (DD 19 1f).

Another within-district coordination factor, the alternate week schedule, is arranged so that students have double periods in every class in both schools. For instance, during the week at Manning High School, a special education student would have two periods of English and two periods of social studies. When the same student goes to Brown, he or she could have two periods of baking and two periods of food preparation. Though there are logistical complaints about this scheduling format, the double periods seem ideal for vocational training, which may benefit from more uninterrupted instructional time.

The alternate week schedule has several benefits and difficulties. The benefits include intensive vocational training, modern teaching technology, and modern equipment and facilities. Yet, there are some problems as well. A vocational teacher commented that, "alternate week attendance can cause problems with review and retention of materials" (DD 13 1b). She felt that this is minimized at Brown because the work is skill based and individualized. When students return from Manning, the Brown teacher simply gives them the appropriate individual task sheets, and students resume working where they left off a week earlier (DD 13 1b). One parent said that at first her son did not like going to two schools. He did not want to leave the home school (DD 17 2c). One Manning student with a learning disability succinctly summed up his reasoning for not applying for placement at Brown. Referring to the double-period scheduling format, he noted: "you have to make up what you missed" (EK 23 1f).

Coordination with Outside Agencies

Coordination of effort takes on a new dimension when one leaves the school district and attempts to work through agencies external to its governance. Of course, this aspect of outreach is vital for a successful transition, which by its nature must reach beyond the school district. The end-point of this crossing of the school district's political boundaries is precisely where the greatest opportunities lie for students in transition: the community and the resources within it. However, the school district is a self-contained bureaucracy with personnel procedures very different from those in the private sector. "Drop in some time", or "meet me for lunch", may be standard business practices, but such meetings are not as easy for school district staff members whose schedules and activities are closely monitored.

The school district must coordinate services with other bureaucracies, such as the state's Office of Employment Security, OVR, sheltered workshops, and so on. Each has its own set of laws and regulations, its own sources of funding, and has staked out a specific pool of clients to serve. For example, school district staff have specific educational requirements, are relatively well paid, and have fairly low rates of job turnover. Community-based social agencies, by contrast, are not very well paid, and have frequent turnover of staff. These differences are magnified by problems in continuity as students leave school and look for community services. The schools serve all and reject none, whereas community services are quite limited in scope and number, and can serve only a minority of those in need.

Staff interviews produced striking and consistent results regarding outside service agencies. Staff members further up the administrative hierarchy had a sophisticated knowledge of interagency agreements, laws, and district practice; staff closer to the classroom believed that there were minimal contacts with outside agencies. This is a problem because classroom teachers and counselors for the most part contribute to school-based IEP goals and activities, and their students could miss some opportunities for community-based training. The first chance for contacting outside agencies may come during the IEP meeting or during preparations for the ITP. Yet, most school personnel interviewed had little to do with outside agencies.

A parent saw outside agencies as "needed to fill in the cracks when schools did not give sufficient services" (DD 17 2c). She felt that parents did much of the outside agency coordination by belonging to various groups. For example, a parent, looking for supplemental services, might join the Police and Firemen's Association for Handicapped Children because that agency provides equine, camping, and other activities not typically offered by the schools (DD 17 2b). Many parents, working together, have informed themselves of service agencies and seek them out independently of the school district (DD 17 2b).

Clearly, the impressions of those closest to the student are that outside agencies currently play a minor role in transition. In reality, there is a web of personal, institutional, and legal relations among the district and several other agencies, though so far the impact of these relations is mainly confined to middle and upper level managers. Examples of this cooperation are the formal agreements between the district and the Philadelphia Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, and a similar agreement with the Philadelphia Office of Mental Retardation (Doc 40.1, 40.2). These agreements spell out in plain language who is eligible for services, and what responsibilities fall to each of the parties. Though they must be tested in practice, these documents are good faith efforts to ensure interagency cooperation and planning.

Philadelphia is in the position of having many services available, but having many more persons in need than can be accommodated. Post-high school services are scattered around the city, and school personnel may be aware of only a few. Consequently, many staff involved in transition have little knowledge of or interest in outside agencies. There are some exceptions to this approach to outside agencies. Not surprisingly, the exceptions to the rule use a fresh outlook for outreach. This was particularly evident among some staff and administrators at Brown, whose approach to outside agencies was proactive, very much like the parent quoted above. Their example shows one way around the barriers to cooperation.

One way in which Brown promotes cooperation among various service agencies is to cultivate personal and professional networks. Examples of Brown's staff membership in outside associations include the Chamber of Commerce (DD 25 1d); Philadelphia School District groups, such as school administrators; professional groups such as The National Association of Vocational Educators (DD 25 1c); and alumni groups from Temple University, such as the Education Alumni Group (DD 25 1h). Sometimes the effect of these contacts was direct, as when a local chapter of the Chamber of Commerce attended a school reception (DD 25 1g), or when a business group agreed to sponsor the school and receive some of its graduates into jobs (Doc 18; DD 25 1d). Other contacts may have less obvious results, but the researchers observed and spoke casually with several groups of business people who were visiting Brown for one reason or another. In general, Brown staff members try to multiply their effect by encouraging teachers to join professional associations, by distributing information and newsletters to the teachers, and by encouraging professional presentations.

IEP and Transition Planning for Students with Disabilities

Philadelphia has responded to transition mandates by extending already-established IEP procedures to the planning of high school special education programs that include vocational and life-skills components. These procedures include meetings among each student's IEP committee members, the student's parents, and, on a case-by-case-basis, the student herself or himself. Other routines include the handling of matters related to due process and parental rights (DD 11 1f), the development of the written IEP document, and a two-year reevaluation (EK10.1). As the student approaches the age of 21, the ceiling age for high school services, his or her committee must begin to oversee the student's transition from school to community-based services.

Like most school districts, Philadelphia struggles with dilemmas unique to its community when planning for the change from school to adult living for a student with handicaps. The role and involvement of parents in this planning certainly presents one set of dilemmas, and they are addressed in a separate section. Other dilemmas relate to curricular decisions and resources, and to problems associated with amassing any one combination of professionals at any one place and time.

Curricular Decisions and Resources

For the most part, decisions about what students should learn are well considered. Efforts by teachers and job coordinators of transition-related projects have contributed to informed decision-making for and with students with handicaps. A series of state and federally funded life-skills projects have served to upgrade inservice training and provide curriculum materials and educational assessments for students (Doc 8). Furthermore, individual initiatives by teachers and administrators at Manning and Brown help expand the school and community-based resources for an appropriate curriculum (EK 9.6; DD 25 1d).

Yet barriers can get in the way of good decisions and appropriate resources. Exactly what combinations of vocational and life-skill programs are appropriate for students with mild handicaps, for students with moderate handicaps, and for those with severe handicaps? Although the resources are in place to provide high quality instruction once a student's needs are known, the resources needed for precise analysis and determination of some students' instructional needs are hard to come by (EK 2.6).

At least three factors may contribute to creating the need for better vocational and community-based assessment. One factor is the centralized vocational evaluation procedures conducted in cooperation with Philadelphia's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (EK 2.6). Whereas students at one time were given longer (up to 10 days) and more intensive evaluation in locations closer to their home schools, they now must travel to North Philadephia for a one-day evaluation (EK 2.6). Consequently, Brown and Manning teachers who provide programs and services related to vocational preparation have little in the way of useful student data. For example, a student's IEP may specify a vocational program as one of the services, but exactly what program, exactly what entry and terminal skills are necessary, and their timelines for accomplishment are often left to teachers to determine (EK 2.6).

Another factor contributing to the need for better assessment procedures is the sheer time necessary for professionals from a variety of school-districts and community agencies to study a student's needs and share information adequately (EK10.3). For example, Brown and Manning are 20 minutes apart by car. A one-hour IEP meeting involving only Brown and Manning personnel requires a big piece of at least one person's morning or afternoon. Brown, for example, does provide for teacher input through its Vocational Review Committee. Through this group, initial planning is done for students selected for the skills center. However, considering that Manning students "carry" their IEPs to Brown, Brown's vocational and special education teachers must be involved with the IEP team in gathering and analyzing appropriate program information, such as present levels of performance, goals and objectives, and related services. In addition, the timing of IEP planning is critical, because if certain deadlines are missed the student may not be eligible for vocational education. School staff who work primarily with special education may not be aware of these deadlines because special education is accustomed to admitting students throughout the year without deadlines for enrollment.

Diversity of opinion concerning the concept of transition itself constitutes another reason for better assessment. Transition is perceived in a variety of ways by parents and school district personnel (EK 2.1). These perceptions affect how various personnel view any one student's transition, and thus may affect decisions about curriculum and resources for that student. Relative to the student's individualized program, the following aspects of transition appear open to various points of view.

One diversity of viewpoint about transition ranges along the dimension of global-to-specific (EK 2.1). Should instruction toward one's transition involve quality-of-life goals: meaningful friend-family networks, safe and pleasant independent living, productive long-term employment? Or should instruction be focused only on one's eventual employment? Are there not several transitions throughout one's schooling and adulthood? Or, for pragmatic purposes, do we focus singularly on the high school-to-postsecondary transition? For each student, the more global viewpoint has unlimited implications for the amount of school and community resources that might be used. The quality-of-employment viewpoint is more in line with national political priorities in transition since competitive employment is a productive showcase for public-funded support of handicapped persons in this country. The global viewpoint potentially requires large resources because it looks at the broadest measures of success in society, and because it postulates ongoing services.

Another diversity in view relates the exact roles high schools and community service agencies (OVR, OMR, Advocacy Groups, etc.) play in the transition process. The increased public scrutiny now given to handicapped students' exit from high school requires a variety of community service agencies to formalize relationships with the school district in general, and high schools and skills centers in particular (EK 1.3; 2.6). Statewide and district policies in this regard have been drawn up (Doc 40.1, 40.2), and some are ready for implementation (i.e. between the district and Philadelphia's OVR; and the district and Philadelphia's OMR).

But the heart of collaborative agreements is what people actually do in terms of their knowledge, degree of input, and talent. Those qualities are in place in the Philadelphia community. They exist at Brown and Manning; they exist in the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. They exist by virtue of funded projects as well as bootstrap efforts. What stands out, however, is the fuzziness about who should be providing what resources for any one student (EK 2.1). If in a given case, vocational assessment information is necessary, teachers and job coordinators must provide most of it for themselves. The responsibility to initiate collaborative relationships between schools as well as with community agencies appears in reality to be that of administrators and counselors, and support personnel in the district.

The Role of Parents

If parent involvement in educational planning for students with disabilities were ever to have a most favorable climate, it would be in Philadelphia. Though the will to assert their partnership with school personnel in planning for their child's future will vary among them, parents are provided an array of choices in Philadelphia's legal and advocacy service networks. Moreover, many of these resources are provided through parent advocacy groups. These resource networks include services relating to legal, financial, transportation and recreation needs of families with handicapped members (EK 1.3). The district itself provides each sub-district with a parent involvement specialist to buffer the mechanics of IEP development between home and school (EK 3.4). Moreover, groups like the Parents Union, the ARC, and the Police and Fireman's Association for Handicapped Children provide a variety of supports (EK 3.5; 3.6).

The assertive parent, then, has the potential support and the forum to provide meaningful input into program development and future planning intended by those who wrote and passed P.L. 94-142. This input may be solely consent, it may take on an adversarial nature, or it may involve a truly collaborative relationship with teachers and other professionals. In whichever way a parent's input is characterized, the mechanics for that input are in place within the school district and the community. Nevertheless, estimates of the general percentage of parents involved in transition planning, and of the level of their involvement are elusive.

Dilemmas Faced by Parents

Despite the resources and support, there is no respite from barriers to transititon in any one family's case. Economics and connections through family and friends play a large part in the mix. A family's network of friends and community service contacts can provide an awareness of what's "out there" in the form of support and assistance. In the best case, parents are involved in educational programs themselves, interact with parent involvement specialists, develop productive relationships with teachers, and hook-up with Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Vocational Rehabilitation services, etc., as needed (EK 1.3, 3.4).

Even the well-informed parent must continually keep a step ahead to participate in his or her child's successful transition from school to adult life. Being in touch with knowledgeable teachers and other support staff seems a smart way to plan properly for the future. In Philadelphia, a variety of independent living and non-sheltered employment opportunities exist for youth with handicaps (EK 6.3.6). At Brown and Manning, teachers and job specialists literally can engineer employment transitions through school-based training and fruitful job analyses and placements (EK 6.3.6).

In the worst case, a family is unaware of resources or runs into snags in the system. It becomes, for example, more reasonable for a person with moderate handicaps, fresh out of school, not to work and receive SSI benefits if his most likely employment option is a sheltered setting that pays less than SSI. Some families can afford to choose the workshop if it suits their children; other families must take the SSI payments. Uninformed families may not even be aware that options such as SSI or workshops even exist.

Quality of Life for Youth with Disabilities

One way to view transition is in terms of three independent goals related to a person's general quality of life: residential living, social and interpersonal relations, and long-term employment. In effect, a person "transits" from the confines of compulsory schooling to various levels of satisfaction with reference to these three life goals. The effect of a handicap requires the family, the school, and community services to arrange for the necessary adaptations if life goals are to be achieved.

In addition to its vocational preparation programs, the district began providing curriculum related to life skills (EK 2.4); that is, what skills must one posssess to enjoy a reasonable quality of residential, social and occupational life? A series of federal and state projects toward this end have been implemented in district special education programs during the past four years (Doc 40.1, 40.2). Shifting gears through curriculum revision is a slow process anywhere; nevertheless, the district has the talent and resources to complement its vocational preparation with appropriate curriculum to teach the art of living well.

When a student graduates, he or she has some degree of access to community services, which ideally continue where the school left off. For the student with mental retardation for example, OMR provides teams to consult and provide training and services (EK 6.2.1). Waiting lists and supply and demand factors impede full access to independent living options (EK 4.1). However, teachers, and the Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC) and Parent Union groups help encourage family long term planning, a strategy that appears most useful in avoiding snags (EK 3.2). Further, a variety of support groups can assist in recreational, legal, and other matters concerning independent living (EK 1.3).

Socially, students with disabilities, particularly students with moderate disabilities, depend on their families for most if not all of their activitities during schooling and on into adulthood. In the best of circumstances, families provide models for post-school life and employment, while teachers provide climates for social interaction with handicapped and nonhandicapped peers. These circumstances plus actual training in social skills, especially for younger students with handicaps, bode well for increasing the quality of students' social life in and beyond school.

It is in regard to employment that much of the action, energy, and talent of school and community service personnel is devoted (EK 2.1). There is a concerted effort to redirect teacher talent into community settings (EK 9.1). Although communication is a problem at times, skills center and high school teachers collaboratively create a variety of job placements for handicapped students (EK 9.6). Although in many cases high school students are not paid, they gain experience that, in at least some cases, can lead to successful post-school employment.

At Brown, a host of resources through professional networks yields many creative work experiences and job possibilities for students. Collaboration has resulted, for example, in enclave employment settings with Rohm and Haas, a chemical manufacturer (EK 9.4). State laws involving employer incentives such as tax credits and legal advice help the collaboration pay off (EK 9.3). No less important is the knowledge about the Philadelphia community on the part of the teachers involved in vocational training and job placement (EK 6.3).

Ironically, while the appropriate talent and resources exist to prepare students for adult living, following up on their progress after graduation is troublesome. Philadelphia is not alone in this regard, and its school personnel encounter the obvious big-city barriers to locating and maintaining contacts with graduates. Yet comprehensive follow-up would enable special education administrators to adjust and refine life skills instruction and vocational preparation. It would also allow teachers access to information about and continued contact with former students. Currently, some teachers do this principally on their own initiatives (EK 8.0).

Community Relations

When Madeleine Will first coined the phrase "bridges-to-employment" for handicapped youth, most states left it to local districts to decide which, if any, bridges were to be built and maintained. Once the political momentum of the federal transition movement accelerated, states, including Pennsylvania, began mandating interagency agreements between schools and community service agencies to assure that coordinated transition efforts were in place. In Philadelphia, there will be core transition teams that will assist in the transitions of students with mild and moderate handicaps to employment, to post-secondary training, and to other aspects of adult living. These teams are made up of school, OMR, and OVR professionals (EK 1.1). Of course, it is what these professionals actually do on an individual's behalf rather than a mandate or signed agreement per se that benefits the individual with a handicap.

The Brown staff's initiative in developing a large network of supports from other agencies is a case in point. The affiliations of the administrators and staff at Brown reach out nationally, statewide, and locally, dovetailing into opportunities for partnerships between Brown and the community on behalf of students. The relationships with employers developed by the job coordinators and by Brown and Manning teachers not only benefit current students, but will serve future job development well.

It is within the promise of individual initiative, however, that the need for progress remains. Despite formal district-wide revisions in curriculum and instruction, some handicapped students remain ill-prepared for adult life (EK12.1). The move toward community-based, life-skills instruction and place-then-train vocational preparation at times is slow (EK 9.2). For some, in-school instruction and sheltered, pre-vocational training are still seen as sufficient and appropriate (DD #27).

Transition can be turbulent for professionals and students alike. Nevertheless most special education staff members value the community as a setting for current instruction rather than a remote possibility for future employment. Statewide follow-up studies of graduates and leavers with disabilities across the country support this contention. These findings are buttressed locally by data from the Urban Model and Life Skills Projects (Doc 8; EK 9.2). Thus, while slow, Philadelphia's curriculum revision toward more of a community orientation is well-grounded and appears to be gaining in momentum.

Individual initiatives, formal agreements, and the variety of personal and professional networks in between help characterize Philadelphia as a community in which one with a handicap, in more instances than not, has a pretty good chance of adapting satisfactorily to adult life. Coexisting with opportunity, however, is the inescapable magnitude of the city with respect to history and tradition, size, (and literally, shape), population, and cultural and economic diversity. Generalized policies seem less able than individual initiative to respond adequately to the diversity in people's needs that this magnitude brings.

Conclusions

This study of special education in Philadelphia has focused on the contributions of Manning High School and Brown Vocational Skills Center toward preparing their students with disabilities for a successful transition from school to adult life. A successful transition can be measured against the yardsticks of process and product. The process of transition, what the school offers, and the product of transition, how students fare in life, must be addressed. The process of transition service provision can be addressed through three questions: (1) is the program individualized ? (2) are services of high quality ? (3) is interagency coordination provided? The product of transition can be addressed by looking at successful job placements and the student's overall quality of life.

Are transition programs individualized? In a word, yes; students' IEPs are individualized and contain references to transition fairly early in the process. The various professionals involved with IEPs and ITPs see that goals and programs fit the student's needs. One administrator in charge of special education said she made it a point to review all IEPs with individualization in mind, and she has corrected staff members when they tended to develop group goals (DD 4 1e).

Are transition services of high quality? Once more, the answer is yes. Throughout the system there is a knowledge of and a commitment to providing good transition services to students with handicaps. This runs from the Executive Director of Special Education through the classrooms. The issues of transition are relatively new in Philadelphia, and the mandate for action is fresh (DD 30 1a), so there is a group of sophisticated professionals from the Offices of Program Development and Career/Vocational Education who are working with enthusiasm. The program they are developing is comprehensive and at the same time clear enough for teachers and parents to understand and use.

Is there effective interagency coordination? This aspect of transtion is itself in flux, and is perhaps the most important, though most difficult piece of a transition program to implement. Moving beyond the school district and interacting with outside agencies is not a traditional part of education. It has been somewhat difficult to establish connections with other service agencies, and even more difficult to generate full staff awareness of these connections. However, there have been many strides toward interagency agreements. Examples include the tentative agreements to coordinate services with The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and with the Office of Mental Retardation. Other examples include a less formal system of community relations at Brown with parents, employers, business and professional groups, and government officials.

Are successful job placements made? This question is difficult to answer because follow-up data are weak. Certainly some students have made successful transtions to gainful employment, and their teachers are aware of them. What is hard to tell is how well special students are doing as a group. What kind of jobs are held, for how long, and by what category of disability? Are there programs that consistently place students in good jobs, or programs that seldom succeed? These questions can only be answered by systematic longitudinal studies of special students. It may be difficult to find resources for follow-up work, and tracking former students will sometimes be hard, but without such information a full evlauation of transition services cannot be made. In addition, those data are needed to tell the school district which programs work and which ones need to be changed.

Is quality of life satisfactory for former students? Essentially, no one knows the answer to this question. It, too, is an issue for longitudinal follow-up, and can be inferred in part from information about employment. However, in addition to employment satisfaction, quality of life measures will include adequate housing and a rewarding social life.

Obviously, the strength of Philadelphia's efforts lies in the process of preparing students for transition, and the weakness lies in knowing how the products, that is, the graduates and leavers, fare after school. If there is a relationship between good programs and success in life, then Philadelphia's special students should do well. Not much about the graduates and leavers is known, however, as they go out to make their way in one of the most complex urban areas in the country. The vastness of Philadelphia holds many opportunities for persons with handicaps, but competition for jobs and housing is more fierce than in other communities.

High school efforts toward transition can be characterized by a commitment from the Superintendent's office through the paraprofessionals who teach in vocational classes. At every level the researchers found a commitment to the very practical idea of transition. There was a widespread belief that students could succeed, especially if they received appropriate high school and interagency services. We did not find people going through the motions of programs and placements; instead, there was a genuine commitment to operate in the best interests of the student. That means that cooperation was evident both horizontally and vertically through the administrative units of the district, which in itself is probably noteworthy.

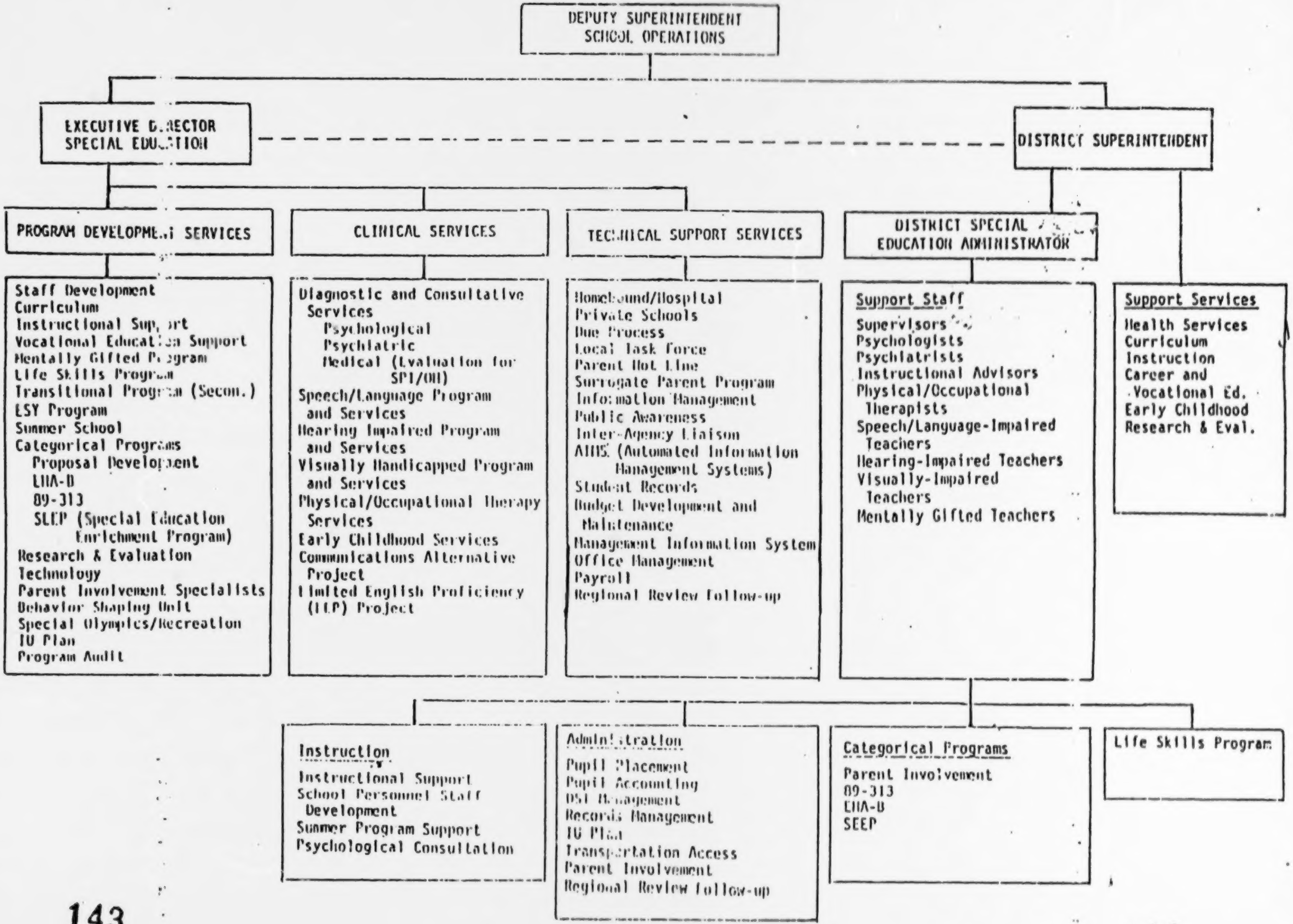
In Philadelphia, high school programs leading to transition are strong because the personal commitment of the staff matches the institutional commitment of the district. The special education and vocational education staffs are professional and knowledgable. They aggressively anticipate problems and try to find solutions, such as interagency agreements with OVR. Philadelphia seems to be in the forefront of transition, anticipating legal requirements and setting the standards for solid programs. The mandate to provide transition services is only a few years old, so high school programming is still developing. Areas for improvement include getting more student participation in the IEP, informing staff and parents of services and opportunities, and conducting more longitudinal research on former students. As the response to the transition movement becomes fully developed these concerns will most likely be addressed.

Appendix

Administrative Organization

Division of Special Education

Administrative Organization - Division of Special Education


DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT SCHOOL OPERATIONS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SPECIAL EDUCATION
DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT
PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
CLINICAL SERVICES
TECHNICAL SUPPORT SERVICES
DISTRICT SPECIAL EDUCATION ADMINISTRATOR
Staff Development
Curriculum
Instructional Support
Vocational Education Support
Mentally Gifted Program
Life Skills Program
Transitional Program (Secon.)
ESY Program
Summer School
Categorical Programs
Proposal Development
EHA-B
89-313
SEEP (Special Education Enrichment Program)
Research & Evaluation
Technology
Parent Involvement Specialists
Behavior Shaping Unit
Special Olympics/Recreation
IU Plan
Program Audit
Diagnostic and Consultative Services
Psychological
Psychiatric
Medical (Evaluation for SPI/OH)
Speech/Language Program and Services
Hearing Impaired Program and Services
Visually Handicapped Program and Services
Physical/Occupational Therapy Services
Early Childhood Services
Communications Alternative Project
Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Project
Homebound/Hospital
Private Schools
Due Process
Local Task Force
Parent Hot Line
Surrogate Parent Program
Information Management
Public Awareness
Inter-Agency Liaison
AIMS (Automated Information Management Systems)
Student Records
Budget Development and Maintenance
Management Information System
Office Management
Payroll
Regional Review Follow-up
Support Staff
Supervisors
Psychologists
Psychiatrists
Instructional Advisors
Physical/Occupational Therapists
Speech/Language-Impaired Teachers
Hearing-Impaired Teachers
Visually-Impaired Teachers
Mentally Gifted Teachers
Support Services
Health Services
Curriculum
Instruction
Career and Vocational Ed.
Early Childhood
Research & Eval.
Instruction
Instructional Support
School Personnel Staff Development
Summer Program Support
Psychological Consultation
Administration
Pupil Placement
Pupil Accounting
DSI Management
Records Management
IU Plan
Transportation Access
Parent Involvement
Regional Review Follow-up
Categorical Programs
Parent Involvement
89-313
EHA-B
SEEP
Life Skills Program

SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: A CASE STUDY IN A RURAL, SMALL-TOWN SETTING IN WEST TEXAS

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Post-Audit Draft

September, 1988

Table of Contents

Page

Introduction 1

Special Education and Related Programs and Services 3

- Direct Services and Programs: Special Education 5
- Direct Services and Programs: Vocational Education 7
- Vocational Rehabilitation Programs and Services 8
- Support Services: The Role of SELCO 9
- Mainstream Classrooms 13
- Special Education Classrooms 14

Viewpoints: Students and Graduates of Area High Schools 16

Some Issues of Concern to SELCO Participants 20

- The Emphasis on Social Networking and Friendship 20
- The Purpose of Special Education 22
- The Strength of Vocational Programs 23

Policies and Practices that Work for SELCO Special Students 24

Policies and Practices that Pose Barriers 26

Concluding Remarks 27

Special Education for High School Students in a Rural, Small-Town Setting in West Texas

Introduction

Portrayed for years in song and verse, the small town symbolizes rural America. Small towns pepper the map of this country; Slaton is one of these towns. Slaton is a quiet, West Texas community of a little over 7000 citizens, close-- but not too close-- to the city of Lubbock. Settled in the late nineteenth century, the town was named after O. L. Slaton, a prominent banker and rancher. Slaton was established in 1911 and, for many years thereafter, served as a junction for the Sante Fe Railroad's southwestern trunk (Doc 33).

For many small towns across the country, the railroad's influence on local economies is waning. Slaton is no exception. Although Lubbock County assesses property value based in large measure on petroleum in addition to electrical generation and agriculture, agribusiness now dominates Slaton's day-to-day econonomy (Doc 39; EK 6 5c). With the drop in oil prices during the early '80s, many Texans have sworn off dependency on petroleum industries in favor of diversified alternatives such as service, manufacturing, as well as agribusiness industries.

Although it has always been a staple crop, cotton now prevails in the Slaton area. The town itself is the home of three cotton gins and many more occupy the sides of U.S. Highway 84 between Slaton and Lubbock. An outsider can launch a spicy conversation with a native by asking a simple question: how's the cotton going to do this year? Although last year's crop was good, hail and other West Texas weather horrors ruined the crops of the mid-'80s (EK 17 3d). Ordinarily a pleasant spot for breakfast and banter, the Slaton Steak House can be pretty grim following a hail storm.

Geographically, Slaton and three adjacent towns share a portion of southeastern Lubbock County. Slaton and its smaller neighbors line up along or near Highway 84. Six miles to the northwest of Slaton via the highway is Woodrow, a town some observers feel is becoming a Lubbock suburb (EK 44 6a). Eight miles to Slaton's north is Roosevelt, a community named after the younger of the presidential cousins. Like Woodrow and Slaton, this town is the center point of several hamlets, its identity having been forged in 1935 by school consolidation (Doc 39; EK 17 1b). Slaton's smallest neighbor, Southland, lies six miles to the southeast. By car, residents of these four towns are anywhere from 10 to 25 minutes from Lubbock. This proximity affords the opportunity to get away on weekends to a good restaurant, a show, or the fair; to use the resources and entertainment available at Texas Tech University; and, in general, to take advantage of the goods and services a city of 200,000 can render.

Casual observers and scholars alike have questioned the future of the rural American small town. One-by-one, local institutions with which its people identify fall by the wayside. Locally-owned general stores leave and a "superstore" appears a few miles down the highway. U.S. Post Offices are consolidated. Many local merchants can't make a go of it anymore. Incredibly, some people now shop in their homes by cable TV. It is hard to imagine what would happen if the high school, the center of much activity, were to close.

Slaton High School roughly reflects the area's ethnic demographics; about 10 percent of the population is Black, 45 percent Hispanic, and 45 percent white (Doc 39). Many see the Church as the centerpiece of their lives. Yet, if any one bond is shared among these people, it's that they care deeply about their respective high schools. Most people will discuss some of the obvious issues ("Slaton has a good football team this year; Roosevelt's team might be a bit undermanned"). But people also care about the high schools' finished products: the graduates. What will be their contributions to the communities? How well is the high school preparing them to contribute? What sort of quality of life will they have?

With respect to one particular group of high school students and graduates, these are the concerns of the case study to follow. What is the quality of a high school education for students with disabilities who live in Slaton or the surrounding communities? How are they being prepared to contribute to a changing community? What will be their lifestyles as adults? What are the public and private resources assisting their transition to adulthood?

This study addresses these questions through an inquiry conducted during the 1987-88 school year regarding special education and related services in the area's four high schools. Predominant attention is given to Slaton High School, a 33 year-old, well-kept facility with an enrollment of 426 students in grades nine through 12 (Doc 39, GC 12 1c).

Discussed to a lesser degree are the high schools in Slaton's neighboring towns: Woodrow's Cooper High School (330 students, grades 9-12) (MC 2 1a), Roosevelt High School (340, grades 9-12) (MC 3 1a), and Southland High School (45, 9-12) MC 6 1a). For fiscal efficiency, some of the special education programs reside at only one or two of the high schools; eligible students living in any of the other districts' catchment areas are transported by bus to these programs (EK 17 1d). The focus of the case is primarily on the administration of the Southeast Lubbock County Organization (SELCO), a multi-district cooperative that provides special education services to each of the four districts' high schools on a shared service basis (Doc 32).

The case study is organized in three major sections. The first and most detailed section provides a description of programs and services for students with disabilities. Next, viewpoints of high school preparation are presented as seen by SELCO area students and graduates. The concluding section suggests some issues of concern to participants, and reviews policies and practices that work and others that pose barriers for the transition of students with disabilities from school to adult life.

Special Education and Related Programs and Services

A local student with a disability, who is eligible under P.L. 94-142 and Texas regulations for special education and related services, is served directly by, and/or receives indirect support services from SELCO. This cooperative is operated within guidelines stipulated in Texas educational law by a Board of Directors consisting of superintendents from the Slaton, Cooper, Roosevelt, and Southland school districts. SELCO's administrator, the Director of Special Education, serves as an *ex officio* member (EK 44 6a).

Formal operations are guided through monthly SELCO Board meetings during the school year (MC 5 3b). The Board's policies concerning fiscal and facility-related matters are, like many Texans themselves, direct and straightforward (Doc 1). Because of its relative size and central location, the Slaton district serves as SELCO's host and fiscal agent, maintaining facilities for the Director and support services staff (EK 6 1a, 17 2c). Given Slaton's role, the Director serves on that district's Administrative Council along with the Superintendent and his district and building administrators. The Director works more informally with the other three districts, communicating individually with their superintendents, local boards, and others as necessary (EK 44 1a).

Whereas many cooperative organizations provide multiple services to schools, SELCO's efforts are devoted exclusively to special education and related services. Costs are shared *pro rata* by the four school districts (EK6 1a). As fiscal agent, the Slaton district handles the bookkeeping and account management duties (Docs 9, 39, & 48). State and federal reimbursements bearing the cost of educating students within the various disability categories flow through the four SELCO districts according to the number of students identified as disabled who reside within each district's catchment area (GC 23 1b). In June of every year, SELCO bills each district for its share of costs on the basis of the proportion of support services used per district (EK 6 1a). SELCO staff members maintain logs documenting their professional activities relative to each district (Doc 9).

Direct services are provided to high school students with mild and moderate disabilites by special education teachers who are hired, supervised, and, if necessary, dismissed by their local schools (EK 17 5a). When a special education teaching position in one of the SELCO districts is open, the district superintendent forwards copies of applications to the SELCO Director. The Director and the appropriate building principal consult regarding the relative merits of the applicant in relation to the position's requirements. The principal makes the decision about whom to hire, and recommends the applicant to the superintendent. The superintendent submits a formal recommendation to the local school board for final approval or denial (EK 17 5a).

All Texas teachers are evaluated annually through a process structured by the Texas Teacher Appraisal System (TTAS). TTAS reflects an overall effort in the state toward school reform that includes stiffer graduation requirements and a chronological series of minimum competency tests for students, and a one-time-only competency test that was administered to all teachers two years ago (EK 6 3b,c; 58 1e). The TTAS is an observation-based set of instruments that provides a fairly sophisticated, weighted procedure for evaluating teacher effectiveness (Docs 52-55). The SELCO districts evaluate regular and special education teachers in the same manner (EK 17 5b). Principals are responsible for the appraisal and received five days of intensive TTAS training, plus an annual one-day update workshop, from the state department of education (EK 58 1f; MC RCS 2.1). They must arrange for a second appraiser who, in regard to the evaluation of special education teachers, is either the SELCO Director or the support staff Supervisor (EK 58 2a, 17 6d; GC 7 3c). Although district administrators exert bottom-line choice regarding special education staff, it is the SELCO Director and the support services staff who supervise, advise, and consult with the teachers on a day-to-day basis (GC 19 1b).

The subsections to follow describe the various programs and services for SELCO-area students with disabilities. Direct services are those provided from teachers to students. We describe direct, special and vocational education services to students in the high schools, followed by direct services that are provided to students by the Texas Rehabilitation Commission. Next we describe support services, those services that are indirect in nature; that is, they reflect consultative and evaluative activities in the interests of students, but normally do not reflect the direct teaching of students. Finally, we provide glimpses of high school regular and special classes in which students with disabilities are enrolled.

Direct Services and Programs: Special Education

Special education teachers assume various position titles across the country, depending on program terminology unique to each state. Like most states, Texas uses the resource room model designed to provide students with mild disabilities, such as learning disabilities and mild mental retardation, with part-time instruction based on their Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs). The remainder of their instruction occurs in regular subject matter classes in which they are mainstreamed. A total of 12 secondary-level resource room programs operate across the districts: four at Slaton, three at Roosevelt, four at Cooper (one specializing in services for junior high students with behavior disorders), and one at Southland High School (EK 44 6a; MC 1 1a). One hundred, thirteen secondary students were served by Slaton's resource room programs during the 1987-88 academic year, 99 by Cooper's, 115 by Roosevelt's, and 11 by Southland's (EK 44 6a; MC 5 2a,b).

There are also programs that are more self-contained in nature. High school students with mild and moderate disabilities for whom IEP objectives suggest habilitative, vocationally-oriented programs rather than a remedial or diagnostic-prescriptive approach are served in several ways. Vocational Education for the Handicapped (VEH) classrooms reflect essentially a special education approach to a curriculum that stresses vocational preparation for students with mild and moderate disabilities and students from disadvantaged environments (GC 19 2d). Partially funded through federal vocational education funds, VEH enrollment is open to all high school students (GC 19 2c); however, it can be of fundamental occupational and social value to students with disabilities. Two VEH classes serve approximately 40 students from the SELCO districts; both are located on the Slaton campus in a pleasant multi-purpose building (EK 44 6a). One is agriculturally- and trade-oriented in curriculum; the other stresses food services, textiles, and home economics (GC 19 1c) through the Institutional, Home Management, and Food Services program (GC 20 1a; EK PJ). For junior high students, there is a pre-VEH program on the Roosevelt campus that serves students with mild disabilities (mostly mild mental retardation) whose long-term educational planning calls for subsequent vocational preparation (EK 44 1e, PJ).

The Vocational Adjustment Coordinator Program (VAC) combines in-class and work-study learning activities. The VAC professional functions as a resource room teacher of career/vocational and related social skills as well as a work-study coordinator of approximately 37 students with mild retardation and learning disabilities (EK 14 1a, 4c). Like the resource room and VEH teachers, the VAC is required to hold a Texas certificate in special education (EK 14 1c). The VAC devotes one half-time effort to a resource room program at Slaton High School in the mornings and the other half to the work study program in the afternoons (EK 14 1a; MC 1 1b). Students are taught functional reading (e.g., job applications), mathematics (budgeting), and work adjustment skills (e.g., use of work time) in the mornings and are transported to paid work experience sites in the afternoons (EK 14 1d, 2a-g).

There are also two self-contained programs for students with moderate and severe disabilities, principally those classified as trainable and severely mentally handicapped. In addition to the classroom at West Ward Elementary School in Slaton for younger students, there is the "white house" located on Roosevelt's high school campus (MC 4 1a). This program serves 10 secondary-level students with moderate and severe disabilities (EK 44 6a).

Direct Services and Programs: Vocational Education

There is no vocational school or center in the immediate SELCO area. However, a variety of regular high school vocational programs exist across the four districts that mitigate students' having to do without the opportunity for intensive preparation for jobs in agriculture and the trades. Because of external funding incentives that have encouraged enrollments of students with disabilities, these programs provide SELCO area students with access to vocational training.

Vocational Agriculture, Industrial Cooperative Training (ICT), and Coordinated Vocational Academic Education (CVAE) are three such programs. Vocational Agriculture programs are located at each of the four high schools (MC RCS 2.4). In the Vocational Agriculture program at Roosevelt High School, the teacher stresses agricultural mechanics, e.g., engines, cutting, welding, slaughter house techniques, and the like (EK 18 1b). Many graduates enter Lubbock trade schools for certificates or go right into agricultural jobs (EK 18 1d). Some students enter their class projects in local and regional competitions (Doc 39). Fourteen of the 33 students enrolled are those with disabilities (BG 62 1a).

The ICT program resides at Slaton High School (MC RCS 2.5). High school juniors and seniors enroll in this program which stresses skilled industrial job preparation (BG 43 1a). Skills taught range from embroidery to upholstery, gravel preparation, and automotive mechanics (BG 43 2d). Cooperative work placements are arranged and students receive course credit for successful work experiences (BG 43 2e). Of the six young women and 17 young men enrolled, five are identified as having disabilities (BG 43 1c).

CVAE is taught at Cooper High School. Here, basic construction trade skills are emphasized in the context of entry level readiness (GC 24 1a). Generally, about 70 percent of graduates become employed in carpentry and related trades (GC 24 2e). Students, including those with disabilities, are eligible for CVAE by virtue of a one-year discrepancy between expectancy and achievement in two subject areas, or a two-year discrepancy in one subject area (GC 24 1b). Of the 25 students enrolled, about half are identified as having disabilities (MC 5 2c, 1 2b).

Vocational Rehabilitation Programs and Services

The Texas Rehabilitation Commission (TRC) is the state agency responsible for vocational rehabilitation programs and services. TRC programs and services are delivered via six regional offices (EK 25 1b). The Lubbock region is the largest geographically (spanning 74 counties, including the SELCO area), but is the smallest in terms of population served (EK 25 1a). TRC has been working in cooperation with the public schools for over 25 years, although there have been cycles in the amount and intensity of this cooperation. The basic programs traditionally used by the SELCO high schools are the general referral and services program, the Cooperative School Program, and the Extended Rehabilitation Services Program.

For years, vocational rehabilitation counselors carrying general caseloads have used high schools as referral sources in Texas. This basic program has served students with physical and sensory disabilities, many of whom received some type of post-secondary vocational training along with other types of needed services. In the last few years, TRC has attempted to expand its services to all persons with disabilities and has made a concerted effort to identify these persons through referrals while they are still in high school (EK 25 1d). School program counselors have specialized in community-based job training for students labeled mildly mentally handicapped since the inception of the Cooperative School Program in the early '60s. However, this program has diminished significantly since the mainstreaming emphasis began in late '70s. The Extended Rehabilitation Services Program was developed especially for individuals classified as moderately mentally handicapped to provide extended evaluation and training for those who need on-going support.

The recent initiative in regard to transition programming has resulted in a new statewide program known as Networking Effective Transition Services (NETS). NETS is a response to a Texas Senate Resolution that called for an interagency agreement among the Texas state department of education, the Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation, and TRC (Doc 6; EK 25 1c). A successful pilot effort, the Valley Transition Project in South Texas, spawned NETS model sites across the state beginning in 1987-88 (EK 25 1c). In the Winter of 1987, Slaton was selected as one of these sites (EK PJ). TRC's Lubbock regional director indicated that the NETS program based in Lubbock will be one of seven regional programs in the state (EK 25 2a).

The differences between the NETS concept and the old Cooperative School Program relate primarily to the degree of coordinated staffing and services, and earlier planning with students (GC 25 1d, 2a). It is hoped that better planning and coordination will eliminate problems with duplication of services across state agencies like TRC and Mental Health/Mental Retardation (EK 46 2b). For NETS, TRC assumes the coordinating function. Thus, a high school VAC teacher and a NETS counselor can plan, implement, and follow-up the transition of any one student without encountering a web of differing, disjointed policies and procedures from agency to agency (EK 46 2b). Rather than waiting until the student is 17 or 18, transition planning can begin at the earliest appropriate age (Doc 6). For example, SELCO's VAC and the NETS counselor begin preliminary planning for some students at age 12 (EK 46 2b). Given that Texas high schools are responsible for educating students with disabilities through their 22nd birthday (EK 6 5f), early planning can pay later dividends in terms of an array of interagency services ready for delivery.

Forty-five to 55 students and graduates will be served in the Lubbock region each year through the NETS program (GC 25 2c). TRC is allocating funds for transition services, and is funding two new counselors, designated as Transition Counselors, who are beginning to implement the NETS program in the Lubbock region (GC 25 1d). One of these counselors serves the four SELCO districts, working directly with the VAC teacher at Slaton High School as well as with other staffers (EK PJ). This Transition Counselor illustrated a sensible rationale for early planning and interagency coordination. "The problem has always been that kids (with disabilities) disappear after high school. Eventually, you end up working with them anyway as they show up with other problems. So, why not identify, plan for, and work with them early?" (EK 64 1c).

Support Services: the Role of SELCO

SELCO's nine support services staff members facilitate the delivery of special education and related services to high school students living in the four districts' catchment areas. One school psychologist, two counselors, three diagnosticians, and a nurse/social worker comprise a role-specific core staff (Doc 32; EK PJ). A supervisor serves as a consultant with regular and special education teachers, and specializes as well in the dissemination of information regarding SELCO policies and service initiatives (GC 9 1a; EK

PJ). The Director executes SELCO Board policies and evaluates personnel (GC 7 2c; EK 17 6d, 44 1a). In sum, the Director moves the organization forward in progressive fashion with reference to both national issues of priority as well as Texas-style common sense.

SELCO occupies a storefront facility in downtown Slaton sharing office space with the Slaton school district's administrative staff. A new office is planned for the 1988-89 school year (EK PJ). The Director has her office at SELCO; teachers and support staff use the place to meet, think, plan, commiserate, and consult. SELCO staffers for the most part have itinerant positions. They deliver multiple services across the four districts according to a tight, but necessarily flexible schedule (Doc 5).

The school psychologist specializes in the support of referrals, placements, and services for students identified as having behavior or emotional problems (GC 10 1a). She is involved in all referrals concerning these students. She provides consultative services to the junior high school resource room program for students with behavior disorders at Cooper, and arranges for counseling and therapy with graduate students majoring in counseling psychology at Texas Tech (GC 7 3a). The SELCO Director has helped buttress service options for students with more severe behavioral disabilities by nurturing an interagency agreement with Project Intercept (EK 44 3A, PJ; GC 10 2d), a self-contained setting in Lubbock. The districts contract with Intercept each year, placing students for one or two six-week periods if they are judged to need a more restrictive learning environment (EK 44 4a; MC 1 2d).

SELCO's two counselors coordinate referrals and parent conferences, consult with teachers and guidance counselors, and handle other self-initiated legwork; one is responsible for the high schools, the other, the elementary schools (EK 1 1a, 3 1b; GC 7 2d, 2e). The high school counselor also serves as the vocational and transition coordinator for the SELCO districts (GC 7 2d). In this role, she attempts to inculcate a vocational emphasis in the curricula for students with disabilities. She also works with regular and vocational education teachers in an effort to reconcile the need for students to be exposed to the "essential elements" of the academic curriculum with their need for functional, vocational training (EK 1 1b-d). These essential elements, e.g., to write a complete sentence, have been mandated throughout the state as part of Texas's school reform movement (EK 6 2c); students' mastery of them is documented on their transcripts with a minimum standard for passing of 70 percent (EK 1 1c; MC 1 3a). Her reconciliation efforts smooth the rub regarding dual mastery of the academically-oriented essential elements and of the necessary occupational and daily living skills.

The three diagnosticians share evaluative, consultative, and conferencing duties required in the four SELCO districts. They handle all P. L. 94-142-related staffing duties, a process which, in Texas, is termed Admissions/Review/Dismissal (ARD). Each diagnostician is certified in Texas to conduct and interpret both psychological as well as educational assessments of students who are referred for special education, or whose IEPs are being updated or re-evaluated (EK 4 1a,b; GC 7 3b). Each diagnostician shares designated SELCO schools, both secondary and elementary (EK 4 1f; GC 8 1b; EK 5 3a).

Like most special education identification and review processes, ARD functions in an ongoing way that structures referrals of students, eligibility testing, the development and maintenance of IEPs, conferences with students and their parents, and three-year program evaluations (Doc 1; EK 4 3a,b). Whereas SELCO counselors serve in somewhat of a liaison role with parents of high school students regarding transition, the diagnosticians perform more of an interpretive role, translating the implications of tests and other findings for parents and students during IEP updates and re-evaluations (EK 1 1a, 4 1b-e, 3b).

Another function of ARD and of the diagnosticians regards the management of the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills (TEAMS) testing for students with disabilities. TEAMS, along with the essential elements and TTAS, comprise the heart of the aforementioned Texas educational reform package. TEAMS is an updated and revised form of TABS (Texas Assessment of Basic Skills), the latter being the state's initial response to the Texas legislature's call for reform (EK 6 4a). All students are administered the TEAMS at each odd grade level throughout their schooling (EK 6 4b). Students must pass each TEAMS administration, and, to graduate, they must pass the exit level TEAMS scheduled for initial administration to high school juniors (EK 6 4b). A student identified as disabled may be declared exempt from the exit level TEAMS by the ARD committee (EK 6 4c). This determination is based on the degree to which the primary disability interferes with performance on the TEAMS. The exemption is noted on the student's transcript (EK 6 4c).

Provided that credit number and subject requirements have been met, the student can graduate with the transcript notation that she or he was exempt from TEAMS.

SELCO also employs a nurse/social worker who, uniquely, provides both services. She was trained originally as a nurse, and in 1984, received a degree in social work (EK 2 1a). On the surface, this mixture of training and know-how seems unrelated. Yet, those familiar with the needs of students with disabilities are aware that both professions require knowledge and use of an array of resources. Accordingly, the Nurse/Social Worker's services range from consultation with clinics in Lubbock regarding occupational therapy for a SELCO student, to liaison work with the Lubbock Social Security office concerning a graduate's Supplementary Security Income (EK 2 1c). She knows the area and its resources well, and she brings them to bear on students' needs.

The Supervisor works under the Director in a consultative capacity. Although much has been written in the professional journals about the teacher-consultant role in special education, it has been professionals like her who have exerted the initiative to forge the nuts and bolts of such a role. Her duties include curricular consultation, dissemination of methods/materials via the SELCO newsletter, and brainstorming sessions with teachers and SELCO colleagues (GC 9 1a). Much of her current work focuses on the issue of essential element mastery on the part of students with disabilities who must also master the social and occupational skills necessary for a successful adult life (GC 9 1b). In addition, the Supervisor assists the Director as a second appraiser for special education teachers' TTAS evaluations (GC 7 3c).

Somehow, the Director assembled this group and, with them, moves SELCO in a direction that--given the external constraints-- is timely and responsive to students' needs and to the area's context and culture. The Director's formal SELCO role functions have been described above. "What's best for kids" is her guiding light insofar as leadership decisions are concerned (EK 44 5b). With colleagues and kids alike, her approach rings of common sense. She tells the story of the time in church when some citizens with mental retardation made strange noises and distracted the congregation from the sermon. Many technologically advanced, precision-laden suggestions were given her regarding the reinforcement of "silence behavior" of these individuals. The Director simply admonished the young women and men to: "stop making noise during the sermon", so ending that problem (EK PJ).

The Director and support staff, together with the teachers of the various programs described above, form the resources for any one high school student with a disability residing in the area. Like all high school students, she or he spends a lot of time in classrooms. Below are snapshots in words of selected regular and special education classrooms in which students with disabilities are placed in the SELCO districts.

Mainstream Classrooms

The numbers of students mainstreamed into regular education classes throughout the SELCO districts varies widely. Teachers in some classes such as English or Vocational Agriculture reported that as many as 40 and 46 percent of their respective enrollments were of mainstreamed students (BG 62 1a; 48 1a). Yet teachers of other classes such as Geography-History and Civics reported 27 and 14 percent, respectively (BG 51 1a; 40 2d). Although some subject matter classes enrolled higher percentages of mainstreamed students, a single class of approximately 25 students usually had about five mainstreamed students (BG 40 1a; 42 1a).

In most cases these students were seated throughout the room among the other students. In one class, however, the mainstreamed students were grouped together on one side of the room; two were seated alone at one table, and two more were seated with two regular education students at the next table (BG 42 1a). In a physical education class of approximately 40 students, six were mainstreamed. These six shot baskets while the others played volleyball (EK PJ).

Most teachers thought that while some skills of the mainstreamed students were generally lower than others, nondisabled students were not always aware that a classmate was being mainstreamed. One factor that perhaps accounted for this anonymity was the mastery teaching approach used in some of these classes. Here, each student received the same assignments with individualized completion rates (BG 48 2c). This allows, as one teacher remarked, for "a common ground to gripe" (BG 48 2c). Another more pervasive factor could involve social skills; their academic problems notwithstanding, some students can be classified as disabled, yet not need training in the subtle social skills necessary to blend in well.

Each classroom teacher had her or his own way of accommodating the mainstreamed students within the classroom. For example, one English teacher's general goal for mainstreamed students is to read material and communicate that material among themselves and others (BG 48 2a). She grades the students on the basis of their potential and improvement, hoping that each student develops a feeling of competency from even partial success on an assignment. Each teacher agrees that while techniques and content levels differ from student to student, what "helps an LD kid will help all kids" (BG 48 1b).

One of the more compelling examples of accommodation emerged from a junior high classroom of approximately 15 nondisabled students and Ed, a student with cerebral palsy. This young man was of better than average intelligence. Though his speech was severely affected, he comprehended and manipulated spoken and written language quite well. Spasticity and quadriplegic involvement required him to use a wheel chair and an adapted computer. With the minimal fine motor coordination he could exert through his fingers, he talked with his teachers and peers via an Apple II-C equipped with a joystick. Thereby, Ed engaged and was welcomed in all the curricular and social activities in which his classmates were involved (EK PJ).

Special Education Classrooms

The content and atmosphere of the special education classrooms varied as much as the students enrolled in each class. Each classroom had from five to ten students present during our observations. When resource rooms were observed, students were involved for the most part in functional academic subjects. One high school classroom of nine students with mild mental retardation studied the parts of a business letter. Another classroom of five 13- to 15-year old students identified as learning disabled worked on the concepts of fact and opinion and their differentiation. Bulletin boards in the latter classroom displayed curriculum materials and completed worksheets. The former classroom reflected the activities of the school. Words of encouragement in anticipation of the high school's final football game of the season were apparent in the room during classes and between periods (BG PJ).

The two Vocational Education for the Handicapped (VEH) classrooms were located on the Slaton High School campus. Each had approximately 10 students in the morning classes that we observed. Students are selected for VEH from each SELCO district on the basis of referrals. Those on the referral list are seen by some teachers as "not making it in academics" (BG 41 2d). There are, however, only a few openings per year (BG 41 2e) as funding slots are becoming jeopardized by a prevailing statewide stance regarding the importance of academics over vocational preparation (EK PJ; GC 19 4c). Those who do not participate in VEH must "stick it out back in academics" (BG 41 2d).

Students usually attend VEH for two years. These years vary depending upon space and the readiness of the student. Ideally, attempts are made for students to attend VEH at some point in the eighth, ninth, and tenth grades. Students then are placed in community-based work training during the eleventh and twelfth grades (BG 41 1c; GC 19 3d). Students or their parents, and not the program, must provide for transportation to work sites (GC 19 3d). In effect, this diminishes the possible pool of Lubbock sites and thus limits selection options on the part of VEH.

In VEH classes on the Slaton campus, students learn a variety of skills including those related to food services, woodworking, housekeeping, small engine repair, sewing, welding, and pressing. Young men predominate the shop-oriented VEH class while young women prevail in the Institutional, Home Management, and Food Services Program (EK PJ). Each week, the latter VEH class serves a large luncheon. The VEH teacher prepares menus and purchases food items in advance, while students fix the lion's share of the meal (BG PJ). In addition, students in this class iron clothes daily for the public and learn houskeeping and sewing skills (BG 41 1b).

VEH lunches have become popular among high school and SELCO staff members. The food is tasty and the service is good, albeit sometimes tentative. Students learn occupational skills related to food services, but they also learn some of the more subtle social etiquette skills as well. One of the observers, invited to lunch, turned away from his plate to listen to a staff member while still imagining the last bite of a taco awaiting him on his plate. When he returned his attention to the plate, it was gone ! The VEH teacher gently admonished the premature plate culprit who politely offered to find the missing plate and the taco morsel. The observer probably had too much to eat anyway and wisely declined the offer. The student had learned a valuable lesson in light of the fact that one of the most frequent complaints to restauranteurs concerns the serving etiquette of their hosts and hostesses (EK PJ).

One of the classrooms for students with moderate and severe disabilities was located approximately 300 yards from the main high school building. Having just reconvened following their afternoon rest time, ten students ranging in age from 12 to 21 were seated in four rows of desks. One student in a wheel chair was seated at a table to the side of the class. A brief review of the four basic food groups was followed by time for students to complete their food coloring books. While the teacher assisted one student in finishing the book, others who had completed their books talked among themselves. Following the completion of the coloring book, students were given flash cards of survival words and then some math coloring sheets. Two students left the room to crush cans as part of a class project to save money for a video-cassette recorder (BG #52).

Viewpoints: Students and Graduates of Area High Schools

What is it about high school special education and related services that contributes to the transition of a young woman or man from the status of a student to that of an independent citizen in the community? The truth of the matter is that no educator or other professional knows for sure. With respect to those with disabilities, many believe such a transition ought to be planned with at least three, often independent, outcomes in mind: successful employment, satisfying day-to-day living characterized by independence, and interpersonal fulfillment. In this section, students' and graduates' perceptions of their experiences toward these ends are offered.

Nancy is an 18 year-old junior at Slaton High School (MD 33 2c). She describes her job skill preparation as classroom training in the areas of math, reading, and home economics. Nancy also receives extensive on-the-job training through various paid employment experiences. She works in the high school cafeteria, where she makes $3.35 an hour and receives course credit. Skill training is provided by the cafeteria staff (MD 33 1c). Nancy also has a janitorial job at the high school during summer vacations. She did not indicate whether she received any training during this work (MD 33 2c). Nancy has three other paid jobs outside of school: cleaning, ironing, and babysitting. She says she learns the skills needed for these jobs in VAC, what she calls the "vocational helping program" (MD 33 1e, 2a, 3d). She appears to take great pride in doing her best in all of her job experiences. Her future career interests include truck driving school (MD 33 2f), and food services (MD 33 2e).

Nancy contributes substantially to the support of her large family, financially and otherwise (MD 33 2b). She takes care of a lot of the housework and cooking at home and helps younger siblings with homework (MD 33 3g , 4c). She plans to live at home for a year after graduation, and on her own after that (MD 33 2f). Much of Nancy's preparation for independent living has stemmed from the necessity of her pitching in at home to help with the care of nine siblings. She says she has learned many of the necessary skills for helping at home from her school and work experiences (MD 33 3e, 3g).

When asked what she enjoyed doing with her friends, Nancy replied that she only had one good friend (MD 33 4b) with whom she spends time in outdoor activities. With her family, she spends a great deal of time doing housework, and leisure time is generally spent on outdoor activities or in conversation (MD 33 4a, 4c). Nancy's meager social life seems not to be because of any lack of social skills. Rather, she simply hasn't the time. With so many daily chores, homework, and jobs to keep up, it is a wonder she finds much leisure time. Nonetheless, she seems very satisfied with this way of life.

Xavier is a senior at Cooper High School. He describes his disability as dyslexia (MD 56 1dd). He is enrolled in a mix of academic and vocational courses. He takes Government, American History, and VAC Study Hall. He is also enrolled in two hours of CVAE Woodshop, one hour as a student, the other as an aide (MD 56 1cc).

Xavier spends a lot of time working with his family's horse breeding business (MD 56 2aa). Although he feels qualified to continue in this type of work, he has also developed interests in other career areas to which he has been exposed at school. He expressed particular interests in studying solar energy and refrigeration (MD 56 2aa). Although he is not interested in a career in woodworking, Xavier says that his experiences in the CVAE woodshop class have prepared him for a future career more than any other school experience because it is in this class that he has learned to take pride in his work and maintain a positive attitude on the job (MD 56 1aa).

Xavier would like to live at home after graduating from high school because he likes it, but he would like to be able to travel as well (MD 56 2bb). He noted that, in addition to the CVAE woodshop, his course in speech had been very helpful in preparing him for adult living because of the communication skills he attained (MD 56 2gg). Xavier's suggestions for improvement of the high school were that there should be less time with "nothing to do" in study hall because this is "really boring" (MD 56 2dd), and that there ought to be more work training and less academic subject training overall (MD 56 2ee).

Xavier enjoys inviting his friends out to his barn to spend time riding broncs (MD 56 3aa). He remarked that his high school education has benefitted him in ways above and beyond the learning of occupational skills. He describes his experiences in the CVAE woodshop as something that has helped him "more than anything else in life" (MD 56 1bb). This is because the instructor gives him (and other students) "the respect he would give other adults" and treats them "like friends" (MD 56 1bb). He looks forward to his woodshop courses as the most important and most enjoyable part of each school day (MD 56 2cc).

Carl is a 17 year old junior at Roosevelt High School (MD 61 1aa). His school day consists of mornings spent in classes and afternoons engaged in on-the-job training in farm work for credit and pay at the Texas Boys' Ranch, located nearby (MD 61 1bb). His morning coursework is mostly career oriented; he is enrolled in English, Personal Business Management, and General Agriculture. Carl feels that his high school education has been perfectly balanced between work and academic training (MD 61 1hh). He says that the most important things school is teaching him in preparation for the work world are punctuality, motivation, and attitude (MD 61 1ii). He has several career interests he would like to pursue after high school, including welding, machinery, and the navy (MD 61 1dd).

Carl is not sure where he will live after high school. He would like to live on his own, somewhere in Texas (MD 61 1ee). Although he finds it the most frustrating of his courses because of the difficulty level (MD 61 1gg), his Personal Business Management course is very important in helping to prepare him for independent living (MD 61 1jj).

In his leisure time, Carl enjoys movies and riding horses with friends (MD 61 2aa). He feels that his high school experiences have helped him with his relationships with his family and friends by teaching him the value of respecting others. He says being in school has also helped him to learn how to make friends (MD 61 2bb).

Neil, 28, graduated from Slaton High School ten years ago (MD 34 1a). He describes the job preparation he received as consisting of classes in vocational adjustment, ROTC, agriculture, and welding (MD 34 1c). To graduate from high school, Neil said he had to, "Go to work and go to classes. The main thing was to pass" (MD 34 1d). He feels that his high school education emphasized helping him to become a good worker and a good citizen (MD 34 1l). He describes the high school experiences he had that help him most on the job now as practice filling out forms, reading, and generally, having "someone working with me" (MD 34 2a).

Neil is employed in the parts department of a local automobile dealership. He describes his duties as filling the coke machine, emptying trash, cleaning floors, and stocking parts. "I do whatever needs to be done" (MD 34 1b). Little time is spent in contact with the general public on this job. Neil recalled that he tried a job as a mechanic, but it didn't work out. He has been at his present job since graduating from high school and likes it so much that he has no intention of leaving it (MD 34 1e, 2g).

Neil lives with his parents and plans to continue living with them (MD 34 1f). At home his duties include taking out the trash and mowing the grass (MD 34 2c). For leisure with family and friends, he attends church, bowls in a church league, and enjoys video games (MD 34 2e).

Tanya, 21, another graduate of Slaton High School, works at a flower shop three hours a day (MD 39 1a). She remembers taking courses in high school like math, reading, band, and homemaking (MD 39 1b). She believes that her high school experience was balanced in focus between academics and career training, but leaned mostly toward career education (MD 39 1g). Although she still has some trouble remembering how to make change, she continues to practice this skill as it was taught to her in high school (MD 39 1m). She said that writing checks was another skill learned in school that she uses all the time (MD 39 1j).

Knowing how to talk with people has helped Tanya in her job. This she says she learned in her high school English class (MD 39 1h). She enjoys her job very much because she "sees people" all the time. The one thing she doesn't like is that her stamina is very limited, and thus she tires easily (MD 39 1f).

Tanya lives alone in a local apartment complex (MD 39 1e). Leisure is enjoyed spending time with her family and friends. She especially enjoys going to movies, spending the night with friends, and playing the piano (MD 39 1L). She gives a few piano lessons each week, which she described as difficult. She plays very well, but has trouble communicating to her students what she wants them to do. She also tires quickly during the lessons. (MD PJ 1a).

Some Issues of Concern to SELCO Participants

Many points have been raised in the foregoing sections concerning dilemmas created when multiple interests (state, community, professional, individual) regarding an issue vie for consideration. Although West Texas is a place where geographic, economic, and cultural characteristics claim uniqueness, the needs of students with disabilities and the issues affecting public attention to those needs are surprisingly similar to equally unique contexts in other parts of this country. Nevertheless, SELCO professionals and students must operate in the context of local and state guidelines, and national initiatives in regard to the ways in which special education and related services are provided. Some of the more salient of these issues as they play out in the SELCO context are presented below. The order of their presentation does not imply priority. We follow these issues with a concluding review of policies and practices that seem to work, and those that seem to pose barriers for SELCO area students.

The Emphasis on Social Networking and Friendship

Learning to be liked by others is no small task. From the teacher's vantage point, attempting to teach someone to be liked by others is, programmatically, like kicking a 40-foot sponge. If you're a teacher, where do you start? How do you measure "achievement"? Presuming that the necessary social skills can be identified, how do you set the occasion for their generalization to home and community settings? Many of the curricular areas covered in special education stress the importance of social competence. Yet, the fact remains that

people tend to perceive many persons with disabilities as occupationally competent but socially inept.

Successful mainstream placements, work study placements, and social activies all require "social skills" on the part of those with disabilities. It is possible that some individuals cannot be sufficiently trained in the skills necessary to blend in or to "pass" as it were. It could be that the nature of any one disability militates against even a total-immersion, "Pygmalion"-like approach. A disability can be so physically, cognitively, and psychologically pervasive that the individual, having access to all the training in the world, is still seen as a deviant because of the way she or he looks, smells, thinks, and acts. The person may well quit a sheltered employment job because of the low pay; he may think that a relationship with a person of the opposite gender is more important than sorting broom handles; he may seek another chance at the sheltered job realizing that a little pay is better than none at all. Can social skills training be an answer to these problems?

Meanwhile, the emphasis on vocational preparation for students with disabilities maintains its momentum despite the conflict it encounters with academically-oriented educational reform movements. The array of vocationally-related options for students in the SELCO area is impressive, as is the degree to which former students approximate some form of ongoing employment. Support staff and teachers of resource room, VEH, and VAC programs for the most part provide educational experiences that prepare students for the world of work. In the context of the SELCO area, this effort is not surprising. Texans are working people; but they are also social people.

If it is agreed that community integration in regard to work, living, and social competence on the part of those with disabilities is a worthy goal, then why not launch a concerted, yet common sense effort to teach, and program for the generalization of the necessary social skills? Targeting such an effort formally in curriculum and staff development would be one tack to take. Another would be to maintain contact with students in the community, before and after graduation, in a similarly formal way. Such follow-up could inform SELCO staffers and teachers as to the direction social skills training should take, and to strategies and tactics that prove effective or ineffective. It also could contribute to a graduate's network of human and information resources as well as to her or his cultivation of interpersonal relationships.

The Purpose of Special Education

It is common knowledge that, in round figures, 11 to 12 percent of this country's student population are disabled, and about two percent have learning disabilities. For any one school district's catchment area, it is unreasonable to assume that precisely this proportion of the total enrollment will meet federal and state identification guidelines. Some districts will have more students in need of special education, others will have fewer.

In SELCO, a variety of factors are converging that raise some concern over the role and purpose of special education. The aforementioned school reform movement in Texas has led administrators and regular educators to seek resources for students in danger of being deficient in credit numbers and substance. In Texas, "no pass-no play" applies equally to participation in orchestra as well as interscholastic athletics. The alternative method for identification of learning disabilities allowed in Texas, which involves a qualitative judgement on the part of ARD in lieu of a mathematical determination of the student's discrepancy between expected and actual achievement, can provide a net of sorts for those students who in other places might have fallen between the cracks.

However, SELCO cannot afford the resource allocations necessary to provide quality services to as much as one-sixth of the area's high school students. Forgetting for the moment that issues related to inappropriate placement or overrepresentation of various groups in special education could arise, the major problem with this use of special education is that it is wasteful. Special education should truly be special; its teachers, support staff, materials, and teaching should be special. The goals are habilitation of students based on their strengths, remediation or circumvention of their deficits, and their return to as normalized an environment as possible. With as high a proportion of students served as is evident at Slaton

High School for example, the question must be asked: Are we using the precious resources we have in the best interests of kids with disabilities? If the answer is no, then the common sense, leadership, and initiative so prevalent among the school people in this area should be mobilized to meet state-imposed educational reform responsibilities with resources other than those needed to drive special education programs and services.

The Strength of Vocational Programs

The reform movement has contributed to another issue affecting programs and services for SELCO students with disabilities Evidently, excellence-in-education in Texas affords little room for vocational preparation. The substance of credit hour requirements for graduation include English, mathematics, and science; not agriculture, construction trades, or food services. In their resource room and self-contained classes, students with disabilities are able to receive acceptable credit for English, mathematics, etc. with functional work; that is, instruction that will enhance their independence and satisfaction. This work is duly noted on transcripts and students graduate with the same diploma as their peers receive.

The various levels and intensities of vocational preparation, however, cannot be accounted for on transcripts as meeting the state's requirements with respect to credit number and substance. For students with disabilities, this glitch in the long run is more handicapping for them than are their disabilities. SELCO students with mild disabilities have access to an array of vocational preparation options that is impressive for a rural area. Yet, vocational enrollments are dropping because of the academic graduation requirements; and fewer students mean fewer support dollars by way of federal and state reimbursements. The overall irony is that to improve schooling for the majority, we are limiting resources and options for a minority.

Another problem, perhaps more soluble, impinges on vocational preparation: transportation. Lubbock and Slaton are eighteen miles apart, connected by a four-lane highway. Yet, work placement options in Lubbock are far fewer than they should be. A bus route exists, but Lubbock politics account for only two Slaton stops a day; once up and once back. Some of the vocationally-oriented programs in SELCO depend on students and their parents to provide transportation. In light of the longer-term problem of the reform movement's effect on vocational preparation, SELCO might consider some type of creative, short-term transportation alternative that could be partially supported by the districts just to make do until a more comprehensive long-term vocational strategy is developed. As well, more competitive and less sheltered employment experiences might be created in the SELCO area to lessen the need temporarily for round trips to Lubbock.

In the long run, the SELCO Board needs to determine its mission in the face of the issues suggested above. What are the role and limits of special education? What community and school resources can be harnessed to serve students who fall between the cracks without necessarily identifying them as disabled? Are there others across the state with concerns similar to SELCO with respect to the relationship between excellence-in-education and vocational preparation? Are there political avenues to the state legislature in this regard? Do these issues belong to each of the districts, or just to special education, and hence, to SELCO?

Policies and Practices That Work for SELCO Special Students

Clearly a number of policies and practices in place benefit students identified for special services at Slaton High School and the other high schools in the Southeast Lubbock County Organization. The following section summarizes some of those policies, practices, and strengths that have been described in the previous pages.

1. The SELCO support services staff and the Director provide a strong, directed energy to the program. One gets the sense of progressive movement that typically characterizes effective leadership. The differentiation of roles among staff has evolved in a flexible fashion and has capitalized on individual and collective areas of expertise that are clear to staff and to those with whom they work (GC 7 2c-2e, 3b-3d;12 2c).

2. The climate at Slaton High School where most of the SELCO high school special education services are provided is accepting and students with disabilities appear to fit in well. They participate in extracurricular activities and do not stand out as different. The variety of programs (e.g., resource room, VAC program, VEH program, and regular vocational

education options) works against the stereotyping of students receiving special services (GC 8 4a; GC 9 3d).

3. Program facilities generally enhance the image of the program either by location or attractiveness of the facility. In most cases, special education facilities are located in regular high school buildings, and their students are part of the social fabric of the high schools. The only exception to this with respect to curricular timeliness and location is the self-contained class for students with moderate mental retardation at Cooper High School (GC 11 2d; GC 12 2b).

4. The SELCO Board provides solid support underlying programs and services for high school youth enrolled in special education. This is evident in the quality and stability of staffing and facilities, and in the policy for awarding regular high school diplomas to students who complete the program successfully (GC 23 1b).

5. Students are considered to be important participants in the educational process and the near 100% participation of students in their own IEPs underscores the SELCO commitment to training for independence.

6. The Vocational Education for the Handicapped (VEH) program is highly visible to the Slaton High School faculty and staff due to its lunch program and presents a very positive image for the school. It appears to maintain a strong identity with both vocational and special education while presenting a distinct program of its own (GC 12 1a). Its curriculum development activities during the past year have made it a strong component of the overall program. The Institutional, Home Management, and Food Services program incorporates especially strong coverage of daily living skills (GC 12 3a).

7. The Coordinated Vocational and Academic Education (CVAE) program at Cooper High School provides an exceptional vocational education alternative to students with particular interests in the construction trades.

8. The recent initiatives of the Texas Rehabilitation Commission (TRC) to begin the provision of transition services through the NETS system in the Lubbock area, including

Slaton, is highly encouraging. The potential benefits of the interagency cooperation resulting from this program are significant.

Policies and Practices That Pose Barriers

Every public school organization has problems yet to solve or barriers to overcome in being as effective as it would like to be. Some of the barriers listed below were identified from inferences derived from statements in interviews or from observations. Others came from direct inquiries regarding any barriers that exist for Slaton High School and SELCO in serving students with disabilities.

1. Each of the components of the high school special education programs available to students at Slaton High School has its own curricular focus, determined largely by the teachers responsible for that component. While this in itself poses no barrier necessarily, there was a common theme throughout the interviews that the social skills of the students, both while in and after leaving the program, pose the greatest obstacle to their adjustment. In spite of this general agreement, there appears to be no collaborative curricular effort to deal with social skill deficits (GC 9 1c; GC 9 2d; GC 10 2A-2c; GC 19 3e; GC 20 3e; GC 21 2d).

2. Leadership initiatives for program policies and practices at each of the high schools where special programs are offered appear to be generated by the SELCO staff and the special education teachers instead of the high schools themselves (GC 7 4a). Since there seems to be a responsive and supportive stance, rather than a negative and restrictive one, this is not a major barrier. However, exemplary high school programs usually have the primary leadership personnel involved in a proactive, committed effort.

3. The issue of over-identifying students (GC 12 3a) through special services (18% versus an expected 11 to12%) may be the result of a practice that was initially intended to meet the needs of certain students who find it difficult to succeed in the regular high school program, even though they were not eligible under strict identification criteria. For example, Texas guidelines allow a student to qualify for learning disability services by virtue of a judgment on the basis of a "qualitative assessment" if a significant discrepancy between expectancy and performance is not demonstrated (EK 4 4c). It may also be due in part to

pressures brought on teachers to refer students for special education services as a result of the new educational reform legislation in the state, which affects TEAMS scores for the school, no pass-no play, and other aspects of what constitutes "excellence" in education (GC 8 4b; GC 9 3e; GC 21 1d). This over-identification of students in special education poses a barrier for those with legitimate and verifiable disabilities by causing more of a drain on limited resources and by opening up the program to possible criticism or even litigation because of inappropriate placement or overrepresentation of various groups in special education.

4. A related issue in the reform legislation that poses barriers to special students' opportunities for vocational education is the effect the increase in academic credit requirements has had on the enrollment of students in vocational courses. In turn, low enrollment has affected the formula funding for vocational education, resulting in the phasing out of some vocational education offerings (GC 19 4c). This gives students with disabilities fewer options for vocational preparation while in high school.

5. Housing and transportation needs are persisting problems in Slaton and the other rural communities in SELCO (EK 25 4d; GC 25 2d). Employment opportunities are greatest in Lubbock because of the economic problems in and around Slaton. The problems presented by housing and transportation needs fall to the graduates of the SELCO programs and their families rather than the schools. Still schools have an investment in the outcomes of their students' lives and can share in the planning for adult services as part of the transition process.

Concluding Remarks

In the previous pages, we have attempted to present special education and related programs and services with a careful eye for detail and for the issues as seen by participants. It should not be lost on the reader that, even today, there are some rural areas in this country in which the parent of a newborn child with a disability has one viable option in seeking services: to move. The West Texas community of Slaton is small, rural, and not without economic difficulties. However, in the main, the services offered through SELCO, and, most importantly, the people who offer them are consistent with best practices and effective in regard to "what's best for kids". SELCO and the four school districts must grapple with some important dilemmas. In all liklihood, the same determination and common sense that characterize SELCO's efforts on behalf of students will see the organization and the four districts through these dilemmas and into the 1990s, having progressed as a result of facing them squarely.

PART 3: AUDIT MATERIALS

1. Auditor's Report for the National Study of High School Programs for Handicapped Youth in Transition
2. Auditor's Background and Vita

Auditor's Report for National Study of High School Programs for Handicapped Youth

Introduction to the Audit

The purpose of this report is to inform the reader of the dependability and confirmability of four case studies conducted under the auspices of the National Study of High School Programs for Handicapped Youth. The dependability and confirmability of these case studies was determined through an inquiry audit, conducted on August 31, and September 1, 1988. The inquiry audit is a process, based on the metaphor of the fiscal audit, in which a person with no vested interest in the inquiry examines records of the inquiry process, the study's data, and the researchers' interpretations.

I addressed both dependability and confirmability concerns in the audit of these case studies. A dependable study is one in which the inquiry process conforms to the accepted practices of naturalistic inquiry. Whereas dependability addresses the manner in which the inquiry was conducted, confirmability addresses the products of inquiry. A confirmable study is one for which data exist in support of all results and interpretations (Guba, 1981).

Gary Clark and Earle Knowlton contacted me by phone approximately three months before the audit was conducted. At this time, Earle offered me a general description of the project and described the goals and sites of the case studies. At the time of our conversation, all data were collected and member checks had been completed; however, Earle expressed some dissatisfaction with the case study drafts. He indicated that there were some inconsistencies among writers and that some important details still warranted attention.

Soon after our first conversation, Earle sent me member check and/or audit drafts of the four case studies. I read these before arriving at the University of Kansas for an orientation meeting and made notes regarding methods, results, and interpretations.

The Audit Process

Orientation to the Audit. I met with Earle at the University of Kansas on Aug 7, 1988 for approximately 3 1/2 hours. Earle presented goals for the conduct of the audit, which were:

1. To determine and attest the degree to which facts, assertions, and interpretations of issues contained in each of the four case studies are trustworthy. That is, are they dependable and confirmable? Can they be traced through the audit trail?

2. To provide a critique of the Project's implementation of naturalistic methodology and suggestions for improving subsequent implementation efforts.

We discussed these goals, to which I agreed. Then Earle explained how the data had been collected and analyzed and how the case studies were produced. He also described how the sites had been selected and discussed the challenges of working with four other researchers in the data collection and analysis process.

Earle next walked me through the audit trail for one case study. He had arranged all the data for each site into a file box that contained:

1. The most recent draft of the case study and all preceding drafts, in chronological order.

2. Member checks, which included actual member check responses to the case studies, the researchers' summaries of these responses, and notes regarding how and where the information from member checks was incorporated into a subsequent draft of the case study.

3. Field notes (which were taken during the interviews) and unitized notes. A comprehensive numbering system on the unitized notes referenced the interview number, respondent's role and

position, page of the field notes on which the unitized note was based, and category into which the note was placed.

4. The category hierarchy for each site. All the instances of each category and subcategory were referenced, by number, to the unitized notes described above.

5. Folders of documents, referenced by number, and document indices. Documents included school district policy statements, brochures, correspondence, newspaper articles, and relevant background literature.

6. The researcher's personal journal of substantive and methodological notes and comments.

Within the case studies, the majority of substantive statements or conclusions were cross-referenced to data, and Earle showed me how to trace these references back through the audit trail.

At the conclusion of our meeting, we decided that I would return to Kansas on Aug 31 and Sept 1 to conduct the audit. I was impressed by the organization of the audit trail and was confident that a thorough audit could be conducted in two days.

When I arrived in Kansas on Aug 31, I met briefly with Earle Knowlton and Gary Clark. Both remained available for the two-day audit period to answer questions as they arose. The audit itself consisted of three interrelated activities: (a) examining the inquiry process, (b) tracing results and interpretations back to the data, and (c) searching for findings that were not represented in the case studies.

Examining the inquiry process. The goal of this activity was to ascertain the dependability of the study. By examining the process that the researchers followed when conducting their study, I looked for evidence that data collection activities were consistent with the stated purpose of the inquiry, the design was emergent, member checks were conducted appropriately, and member check information was incorporated into subsequent case study drafts. Because the study was conducted by research teams, I also looked for evidence that the researchers communicated with one another during their data collection and analysis activities.

To accomplish these goals, I first read the Methods sections of the original grant proposal and of the final report. I then examined lists of interview questions and persons interviewed. I skimmed all correspondence between the researchers and respondents and read the researchers' theoretical notes and journals. Throughout these activities I sought evidence that the inquiry process addressed the study's objectives while remaining open to new insights and issues that emerged during the data collection process.

Tracing results and interpretations back to the data. The process of locating data to support results and interpretations was facilitated by the comprehensive audit trail established by the case study authors. The case studies contained extensive references to original data sources (including unitized interviews, member checks, documents, and journals) or to category hierarchies (which cited the original data source). I chose to check all data citations for the Texas and Philadelphia case studies, 50% of the Vermont citations, and 25% of the Kansas citations. In each case, I read the statement or paragraph that preceded each citation and then read the unit of data on which it was based. I made notes of any results or interpretations for which I did not find supporting data.

Searching for findings that were not represented in the data. This task was more difficult than the one just described, as I was searching for the absence of important or interesting results.

Because the volume of data obviated the possibility of reading all the raw data sources, I relied on the researcher's journal, correspondence, and the sections of data I read while checking citations to suggest issues that were not addressed by the case studies. I also examined the category hierarchies and noted the categories for which the researchers referenced more than three or four units of data. I then skimmed the case studies to determine if these issues or categories were discussed, making notes of any that were not addressed.

Results of the Audit

I found sufficient evidence to attest to the dependability of the four case studies. Interview questions evolved over the course of the study and focused on emerging findings for the site and the study in general. Interview schedules demonstrated that the researchers interviewed a broad range of respondents, including students, parents, administrators, teachers, and adult service providers. Although not always free to choose their respondents, when possible the researchers pursued interviews with respondents who could broaden or clarify extant data. Member checks were exemplary. The researchers expended considerable effort and thought in composing groups of member check respondents and in incorporating their comments, clarifications, and corrections into subsequent case study drafts. Although less extensive at some sites (e.g., Philadelphia), correspondence and journals documented debriefing sessions and ongoing communication among the researchers. Moreover, only minor inconsistencies existed in the analysis process and the resultant case studies. My primary methodological suggestion was that the Methods section include a description of the researchers' qualifications, backgrounds, and constructions regarding secondary special education.

The case studies also were confirmable. I checked over 500 data citations and found support for over 93%. I questioned Earle Knowlton about all results and interpretations for which I could not find documentation and, in many cases, he was able to show me alternate data sources in which supporting evidence could be located. I discovered only three potential findings not addressed in the case studies and presented these to Earle. We then discussed ways that these issues might be incorporated into subsequent revisions of the case studies. Finally, Earle and I discussed how the case studies might be disseminated. I believe that secondary special educators could benefit greatly from the information the contain. I suggested that Earle consider ways to shorten the researchers' descriptions while giving voice to the students', teachers', and administrators' perspectives and synthesizing themes across the four sites.

In summary, I believe this study was conducted appropriately and is consistent with accepted practices of naturalistic inquiry. I also found adequate evidence for the vast majority of findings and interpretations and found few potential results that were not addressed. The authors are to be commended for their thoughtful and diligent inquiry.

Cynthia M. Okolo 9/9/88

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Auditor's Background

Cynthia M. Okolo is an Assistant Professor of Special Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She has experience in naturalistic inquiry and in the substantive area addressed by these case studies. As a doctoral student at Indiana University, Dr. Okolo took courses and participated in seminars with Dr. Egon Guba. She also was a member of a research team that conducted a naturalistic study of maternal perceptions of the health and development of their infants. Her dissertation was comprised of naturalistic interviews and observations of secondary special education programs and she has been a respondent in two naturalistic studies. This is her second audit.

Dr. Okolo has published position papers and original research regarding secondary special education in *Journal of Career Development*, *Journal of Special Education*, *Learning Disability Quarterly*, and *Teacher Education and Special Education*. She is currently a consultant for the Iowa Transition Initiative and is assisting this multidisciplinary agency with their efforts to develop a statewide model of services for secondary special education.

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Education

Institution	Degree	Date	Major	Minor
University of Connecticut	B.S.	1976	Special Education	
University of Connecticut	M.A.	1981	Special Education	Psychology
Indiana University	Ph.D.	1985	Special Education	Psychology, Educational Inquiry Methodology

Professional Experience

Assistant Professor and Remediation Clinic Director, College of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL. Special Education Area. September 1985-present.

Research Associate, Center for Innovation in Teaching the Handicapped, Bloomington, Indiana. Contextual Variables Study Coordinator for Project MICROS (Maximizing Instruction through Computer Resources and Organizational Structures). October 1983 - September 1985.

Software Technician, Vocational Education Services, Bloomington, Indiana. May 1983 - September 1983.

Associate Instructor, Department of Special Education, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana. September 1982 - August 1985.

Research Assistant, Department of Special Education, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana. September 1981 - August, 1982.

Student Teaching Supervisor, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut. September 1979 - May 1981.

Special Education Teacher. Mansfield Middle School, Mansfield, Connecticut. September 1977 - August 1979.

Special Education Teacher, Fields Memorial School, Bozrah, Connecticut. September 1976 - June 1977.

Publications

Okolo, C., & Sitlington, P.L. (in press). Mildly handicapped learners in vocational education: A statewide study. Journal of Special Education.

Okolo, C., Rieth, H.J., & Bahr, C. (in press). Microcomputer use in secondary special education: Special education teachers', administrators', and students' perspectives. Journal of Special Education.

Okolo, C. (1988). Instructional environments in secondary vocational education programs: Implications for LD adolescents. Learning Disability Quarterly, 11, 136-148.

Rieth, H., Bahr, C., Okolo, C., Polsgrove, L., & Eckert, R. (in press). An analysis of the impact of microcomputers on the secondary special education classroom ecology. Journal of Educational Computing Research.

Rieth, H.J., Polsgrove, L., Okolo, C., Bahr, C., & Eckert, R. (1987). An analysis of the secondary special education classroom ecology with implications for teacher training. Teacher Education and Special Education, 10(3), 113-119.

Rieth, H.J., Bahr, C., Polsgrove, L., Okolo, C., & Eckert, R. (1987). The effects of microcomputers on the secondary special education classroom ecology. Journal of Special Education Technology, 3(4), 36-45.

Sitlington, P.L. & Okolo, C. (1987). Statewide survey of vocational educators: Attitudes, training, and involvement with handicapped learners. Journal of Career Development, 13 (4), 21-29.

Shuster, S.K., Guskin, S.L., Hawkins, B.A., & Okolo, C. (1986). Views of health and development: Six mothers and their infants. Journal of the Division for Early Childhood, 11, 18-27.

Guskin, S.L., Zimmerman, E., Okolo, C., & Peng, J. (1986). Being labeled gifted and talented: Meanings and effects perceived by students in special programs. Gifted Child Quarterly, 30 (2), 61-65.

Okolo, C., & Sitlington, P.L. (1986). The role of special education in the transition of learning disabled adolescents from school to work. Learning Disability Quarterly, 9, 141-155.

Cherkes-Julkowski, M., Davis, L., Fimian, M., Gertner, N., McGuire, J., Norlander, K., Okolo, C., & Zoback, M. (1986). Encouraging flexible strategy usage in handicapped learners. Proceedings of the Seventh Congress of the International Association for the Scientific Study of Mental Deficiency (pp.189-196). New York: Metheun & Co.

Okolo, C., & Guskin, S.L. (1984). Community attitudes toward the community placement of mentally retarded persons. In N.E. Ellis & N.W. Bray (Eds.), International review of research in mental retardation (Vol. 12). New York: Academic Press.

Okolo, C., Bartlett, S., & Shaw, S. (1978). Communication between professionals concerning medication for the hyperactive child. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 11, 647-650.

Grants

Okolo, C. (Co-Principal Investigator). A comparison of three computer-based observational procedures. University of Illinois at Chicago Campus Research Board, $7,770. 1988-89.

Okolo, C. (Principal Investigator). Cultural differences in LD students' perceptions and use of CAI. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. $215,000. 1987-89.

Okolo, C. (Principal Investigator). Utilization and evaluation of computer-managed instruction in a special education teacher preparation program. Tandy Educational Foundation, $8,455 in equipment. 1987-88.

Okolo, C. (Principal Investigator). Instructional environments in vocational education programs. University of Illinois at Chicago Campus Research Board, $5,770. 1986-87.

Okolo, C., & Daraskevich, R. (Project Director). Vocational status of young adults identified as behavior disordered. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. $8,788. 1986-87.

Okolo, C. (Principal Investigator). An analysis of the effects of three types of computer-assisted instruction in special education classrooms. Chicago Area Schools Effectiveness Council. $2,400. 1986-87.

Rieth, H.J., Polsgove, L., & Okolo, C. (Research Associate). An analysis of the instructional and contextual variables that influence the efficacy of computer-based instruction for midly handicapped secondary school students. U.S. Department of Education, Special Education Programs. $1,120,000. 1983-87.

Okolo, C. (Principal Investigator). An analysis of teacher activities and student outcomes in resource room programs for mildly handicapped adolescents. U.S. Department of Education, Special Education Programs. $7,170. 1982-83.

Research Presentations

Motivational attributes of computer-assisted instruction. Paper presented Annual Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children. Washington, DC. March, 1988.

Analyses of microcomputer applications with mildly handicapped secondary school students. Paper presented at the Second Annual Technology and Media Division Conference, Baltimore, MD. January, 1988 (with H. Rieth and C. Bahr).

Microcomputers and handicapped students: How do patterns of use change over time? Paper presented at the Annual International Council for Exceptional Children Conference, Chicago, IL. April, 1987.

A cross-cultural study of cognitive bases for the formation of attitudes toward incompetence. Paper presented at the Gatlinburg Conference on Research in Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities. Gatlinburg, TN. April, 1982 (with S. Guskin and M. Cherkes-Julkowski).

Technical Reports

Bahr, C.,Rieth, H., Polsgrove, L., Okolo, C., & Eckert, R. (1987). MICROS observer training manual. (Research Report No. 407). Nashville, TN: Peabody College of Vanderbilt University.

Rieth, H., Okolo, C., Polsgrove, L., Goh, S., & Eckert, R. (1987). MICROS Observational System. (Research Report No. 406). Nashville, TN: Peabody College of Vanderbilt University.

Rieth, H., Bahr, C., & Okolo, C. (1986). The effects of microcomputers on the secondary special education classroom ecology: Project MICROS Year Three Report (Research Report No. 302). Nashville, TN: Peabody College of Vanderbilt University.

Bahr, C., Rieth, H., & Okolo, C. (1986). An analysis of the secondary special education classroom ecology: Year Three Report. (Research Report No. 301). Nashville, TN: Peabody College of Vanderbilt University.

Okolo, C., Rieth, H., & Bahr, C. (1985). Microcomputer implementation in secondary special education programs: A study of special educators', mildly handicapped adolescents', and administrators' perspectives. (Research Report 204). Nashville, TN: Peabody College of Vanderbilt University.

Rieth, H., Bahr, C., Okolo, C., Polsgrove, L., & Eckert, R. (1985) An analysis of the secondary special education classroom ecology: Project MICROS Year Two Report. (Research Report 203). Nashville, TN: Peabody College of Vanderbilt University.

Rieth, H., Bahr, C., Polsgrove, L., Okolo, C., & Eckert, R. (1985). The effects of microcomputers on the secondary special eduction classroom ecology: Year Two Report. (Research Report No. 202). Nashville, TN: Peabody College of Vanderbilt University.

Bahr, C., Rieth, H., Polsgrove, L., Okolo, C., & Eckert, R. (1985) An analysis of the effects of increasing the time spent on computer-based instruction. (Research Report No. 201). Nashville, TN: Peabody College of Vanderbilt University.

Okolo, C., Rieth, H., Polsgrove, L., Goh, S., Yerkes, K., & Bahr, C. (1985). An analysis of mildly handicapped students' perceptions of computer-based instruction. (Research Report No. 104). Nashville, TN: Peabody College of Vanderbilt University.

Okolo, C., Rieth, H., Polsgrove, L., Bahr, C., & Yerkes, K. (1985). An analysis of secondary special education teachers' attitudes toward computer-based instruction. (Research Report 103). Nashville, TN: Peabody College of Vanderbilt University.

Rieth, H., Polsgrove, L., Bahr, C., Okolo, C., & Eckert, R. (1985). An analysis of the secondary special education classroom ecology. (Research Report No. 102). Nashville, TN: Peabody College of Vanderbilt University.

Okolo, C. (1984). Evaluating the impact of mainstreaming. Bloomington, IN: Council for Administrators of Special Education, Indiana University.

Service Presentations (last five years)

Instructional environments in vocational education: Argo High School, Summit, IL. March 1988.

Language arts software for the mildly handicapped: What does it teach? Illinois State Board of Education/Illinois Technology and Media Division Special Education Technology Conference, Oak Brook, IL. March, 1988.

Effective computer-based instruction in special education. Chicago All-City Special Education Conference, Chicago, IL. November, 1987.

Effective computer-based instruction for special education. West 40 ESC #5 Regional Computer Conference, Hillside, IL. November, 1987.

Microcomputers in special education. District 200 Workshop, Woodstock, IL. November, 1987.

Beyond bells and whistles: Microcomputer-based instruction for mildly handicapped students. Illinois Council for Exceptional Children Annual Convention, Rosemont, IL. November, 1987.

Microcomputer-based instruction for mildly handicapped learners. LaGrange Area Special Education District Institute Day, LaGrange, IL. August, 1987.

Facilitating the transition of the LD adolescent into secondary vocational education. Illinois Division for Learning Disabilities Annual Conference, Chicago, IL. February, 1986.

Interactive vocational assessment: Integrating assessment with transitional programming. Presession workshop for CEC National Conference on Secondary, Transitional, and Postsecondary Education for Exceptional Youth. Boston, MA. March, 1985 (with P. Sitlington).

Selecting software for special education. Greater Clark County Schools, Professional Development Day. Jeffersonville, IN. February, 1985.

Considerations in using microcomputers to instruct students with learning disabilities in secondary settings. Annual Conference of the Indiana Federation Council for Exceptional Children. Indianapolis, IN. February, 1985 (with L. Polsgrove, T. McCarthy, and C. Bahr).

Interview strategies for consultants. Sixth Annual Conference, Council for Learning Disabilities. Dallas, TX. October, 1984.

Microcomputer use in assessment and remediation. Indiana Department of Corrections. Bloomington, IN. August, 1984.

Assessment, remediation and record-keeping: Microcomputers in the special education classroom. CEC Microcomputer Conference. Dalhouse University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. June, 1984.

Variables that influence the effectiveness of using microcomputers to instruct mildly handicapped secondary school students. Indiana Federation Council for Exceptional Children, Annual Convention. Indianapolis, IN. February, 1984 (with H. Rieth, L. Polsgrove, S. Goh, and T. McCarthy).

Special needs learners in vocational education classes. Area Vocational School, Bloomington, IN. November, 1983.

Using the ALTOS observational system for teacher evaluation. Linton-Stockton Public Schools, Linton, IN. August, 1983.

Awards

Award for Exemplary Service, New Mexico Federation Council for Exceptional Children, March, 1988.
Proffitt Outstanding Dissertation Award, Indiana University College of Education, 1987.
John H. Edwards Fellowship, Indiana University, 1983-84.
Finalist, Indiana Association on Mental Deficiency Scholarship Competition, 1983.
Student Research Honorarium, Pi Lambda Theta, Indiana University, 1982.
School of Education Fellowship, Indiana University, 1981-1983.

Professional Affiliations and Activities

American Educational Research Association

Council for Exceptional Children
  Treasurer, Technology and Media Division
  Division on Career Development - Interagency Liaison Chair
  Teacher Education Division
  Division for Learning Disabilities

Council for Learning Disabilities

Consulting Editor, Journal of Special Education Technology

Field Reviewer, Journal of Special Education

Consultant to Iowa Governor's Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities

Consultant to Iowa Transition Initiative

Instructional environments in vocational education programs: Implications for secondary special education. Paper presented at the Fourth International Conference on Career Development and Vocational Special Needs Individuals. Nashville, TN. October, 1987.

Factors influencing the effectiveness of microcomputers in secondary school settings. Paper presented at the International Technology and Media Conference. Alexandria, VA. January, 1987 (with H. Rieth and C. Bahr).

Social and instructional environments associated with microcomputer use. Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children. New Orleans, LA. April, 1986 (with H. Rieth and L. Polsgrove).

An analysis of feedback and increased computer time on the academic achievement of mildly handicapped adolescents. Paper presented at Closing the Gap Annual Microcomputer Conference, Minneapolis, MN. November, 1985 (with C. Bahr and H. Rieth).

Facilitating the transition of mildly handicapped learners into vocational education settings. Paper presented at the International Conference of the Division of Career Development. Las Vegas, NV. October, 1985 (with P. Sitlington and D. Moore).

Maternal perceptions of health and developmental problems. Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children. Anaheim, CA. April, 1985 (with S. Shuster).

Instructional environments in vocational education: A preliminary investigation. Paper presented at the Big Ten Research Consortium for the Career Development of Special Needs Populations. Madison, WI. September, 1984 (with P. Sitlington and D. Moore).

Computerized instruction for special education. Paper presented at the Sixth Annual National Educational Computing Conference. Dayton, OH. June, 1984 (with S. Goh).

An analysis of teacher activities in resource room programs for mildly handicapped high school students. Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children. Washington, DC. April 1984.

Maternal perceptions of the health of their handicapped child. Paper presented at the Indiana Chapter, American Association on Mental Deficiency. Indianapolis, IN. October, 1983 (with S. Guskin, S. Shuster, and B. Hawkins).

Gifted and talented students' perceptions of labeling. Paper presented at the H.L. Smith Conference on Educational Research. Indiana University, Bloomington, IN. October, 1983 (with S. Guskin).

Being labeled gifted and talented: Meanings and effects perceived by students in special programs. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. Montreal, Canada. April, 1983 (with S. Guskin, E. Zimmerman, and J. Peng).

Issues in the education of gifted and talented students. Paper presented at the H.L. Smith Conference on Educational Research. Indiana University, Bloomington, IN. October, 1982 (with S. Guskin, E. Zimmerman, and J. Peng).